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On Rabindranath Tagore's 125th Birth Anniversary

TAGORE, INDIA AND SOVIET UNION

A Dream Fulfilled

A.P. GNATYUK-DANIL'CHUK

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With a Preface by
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TO ALL MY INDIAN FRIENDS

PREFACE

The 125th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore is being celebrated this year in India and abroad. The year-long programmes include cultural functions, performances of the Poet's dance dramas, exhibitions of his paintings, exhibitions on his life and times, seminars and conferences, publication of commemorative volumes and research monographs unfolding new facets of the genius of Tagore and his manifold contributions to human civilization, international peace and understanding. Professor A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk's *Tagore, India and Soviet Union : A Dream Fulfilled* is a work of the last category.

When the English version of Tagore's 'Letters From Russia' was first published in 1960, a few months before his Birth Centenary, it was hoped that the letters, 'warm with a sense of adventure and high expectation, will be a link between continents of mind because they provide a basis of companionship and understanding in an age of conflict.' The necessity of such understanding is greater today in a World threatened by the fearful prospect of a 'Nuclear Winter'. A wider understanding and appreciation of a poet, savant and messenger of peace and universal brotherhood like Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore is not merely an academic necessity. It has much wider dimensions and significance. The work of Professor Danil'chuk is particularly important in that context.

Professor Danil'chuk has covered an extensive ground. He has used a vast amount of original and secondary materials. He enjoys a great advantage. Besides Russian, which is his mother tongue, he knows Bengali very well, as also English. What is even more important, he has a genuine love for the Bengali language and, along with it, Bengali culture and mind. This has enabled him to understand Tagore in depth which is reflected in his book. Danil'chuk has yet another quality. He is ardently devoted to the promotion of Indo-Soviet friendship which is a formidable factor in strengthening the movement for international peace and harmony. Tagore, to him, is a powerful inspiration in consolidating and furthering that cause. We all share his conviction and, hence, particularly welcome his book. The chapter arrangements are very thoughtful. The

book, in fact, goes much beyond Tagore and the Soviet Union. It is a well-narrated and documented account of a growing mutual interest, inter-action and cultural relationship between the peoples of two great countries, Tagore being the focal point of the study.

A feature of Danil'chuk's book is that it removed some of the long persisting misconceptions about Rabindranath, particularly in the Western World. That Tagore was not merely a 'mystic' poet, but a poet who had accepted life in all its fulness is amply borne out by his study. Interestingly, at a time when some of Tagore's critics and detractors in our own country were failing to grasp the greatness of the poet and his deep commitment to and concern for the oppressed, neglected and toiling masses, there were men in the Soviet Union who showed better power in comprehension and assessment. Danil'chuk's *Tagore, India and Soviet Union* throws much light on this and many other aspects of Rabindranath. It also explains why there is so much interest in Tagore in USSR.

Tagore wished to see the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres, and promote study and research that will bring different cultures of the world nearer on the basis of their underlying unity. He founded his Visva-Bharati with that object. It is gratifying to us that Danil'chuk has been associated with Visva-Bharati and he has, by writing this book, taken one more step forward towards the realisation of the Poet's dream. This is one more reason why I congratulate Danil'chuk and welcome his book.

Nemai Sadhan Bose

Santiniketan,
1-5-86

Vice-Chancellor, Visva-Bharati University

INTRODUCTION

The present book is being first published in English for the convenience of the larger circle of readers interested in Tagore. For Bengali readers, a Bengali edition will soon come out.

Here I have endeavoured to convey the vast interest and depth of feelings of our peoples for India. I have also tried to show the singularity of the profound, unabated interest of the great Poet in the Soviet Union, the country where he saw the fulfilment of his dreams.

He foresaw with prophetic eyes how fruitful and creative the collaboration between the peoples of India and Soviet Union could be. He was particularly impressed by the Soviet Union because this country had done away with *greed* (one of the great ills of capitalism), thus putting into practice the upanishadic idea of *Ma gridhah* [Do not covet].

The book also aims at giving Indian scholars material for a still more complete, all-round assessment of the life and work of the great Poet.

The work chronologically, covers the period of Tagore's own life time. Of Tagore studies in the Soviet Union after 1941 I hope to write in another book.

*

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*

I am indebted to a large number of Indian institutions, libraries and individuals for help in various forms. I would specially wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Nemai Sadhan Bose, Vice-Chancellor, Visva Bharati, for his gracious foreword to this volume ; to the Director and special officer of the Rabindra Bhavana, Visva Bharati, for permission to use the most valuable collections of the Bhavana (which have helped in enriching this work with many unknown facts and documents), and to the authorities of the National Archives of India.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Rabindra Bharati University, and its Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rama Ranjan Mukherjee, for the high assessment of my humble work, which I regard as an assessment of Tagore studies in Soviet Union on the whole.

I am grateful to Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Institute of Culture, for his kind encouragement.

To Professor Devipada Bhattacharya I am indebted for his helpful comments and for valuable materials and advice, my heartiest thanks to Shri Chinmohan Sehanavis. I am also particularly indebted to the National Library for their help.

I owe special gratitude to Mr. Harish C. Gupta for his cooperation in translating Russian and Bengali texts and for valuable suggestions.

I record my sense of gratefulness to Mr. Rathin Mukherji of Firma KLM (Pvt.) Ltd. and to the authorities and employees of Sreema Mudran for bringing out this book in such a short time.

To conclude, I may say that this book had to be published in a limited time as the aim was to release the book in memory of 125th Birth Anniversary of Gurudeva Tagore and so I have the indulgence of the readers for any error which might have crept in.

A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk

May 8, 1986

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Illustrations	
Preface	... vii
Introduction	... ix
<i>Chapter</i>	
I. The Background	... 1
II. The Formative Years	... 35
III. Russia Discovers Tagore	... 73
IV. New Russia and Tagore	... 121
V. Tagore Discovers Russia	... 187
Bibliography	... 389
Index	... 403

KEY TO SOME ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Akademiya nauk [Academy of Sciences, USSR].
BI	Bibliography of India (<i>see</i> Chapter I, note 2).
bk(s).	book(s).
CW	Complete Works
GSE	Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (English Edition)
II	<i>Image of India</i> (<i>see</i> Chapter I, note 2).
IV	Institut vostokovedeniya [Institute of Oriental Studies]
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
kn.	kniga [book volume]
L.	Leningrad
LGU	Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet [Leningrad State University]
Lnd.	London
LR	<i>Letters from Russia</i>
M.	Moscow
Mak.	Makovitsky (<i>see</i> Chapter II, note 63).
NM	Nepal Mazumdar
NY	New York
Pbg.	Petersburg
Pgd.	Petrograd
R Ch	<i>Rassiyar chithi</i>
R Rach	<i>Rabindra rachanavali</i>
RTF	<i>Rabindranath Tagore : Friend of the Soviet Union...</i> [in Russian]
VBQ	"Visva Bharati Quarterly"
Yunel'	A.I. Yunel' (<i>see</i> Chapter V, note 66).
ZhMNP	Zhurnal ministerstvo narodnogo prosveshcheniya [Journal of the Ministry of Public Education].

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по 15^х рубль за листъ. — — — 1440
- 8032
7490
За всѣ потребныя бумага 15522 Рубль

С. Писаревъ
2^е числа Декабря
1801^{го} года.

Смета, составленная Г. С. Лебедевымъ на типографские

1. Facsimile of G. Lebedev's handwriting. Memo about publication of his books on India. (1801)

РАБИНДРАНАТЪ ТАГОРЪ.

ТВОРЧЕСТВО ЖИЗНИ (САДХАНА).

ПЕРЕВОДЪ СЪ АНГЛИЙСКАГО

А. Ф. ГРЕТМАНЪ И В. С. ЛЕВНИКОВОЙ

СЪ ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕМЪ

П. И. ТИМОФЕЕВСКАГО,

ТОВАРИЩА ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЯ РОССИЙСКАГО ТРОИЧЕВСКАГО
ОБЩЕСТВА.

2-ое ИЗДАНИЕ.

Книгоиздательство „СОВРЕМЕННЫЯ ПРОБЛЕМЫ“
МОСКВА.—1917.

2. *Sadhana* (in Russian). 2nd edition. Title page. The title :
Creating the Life. (1917)

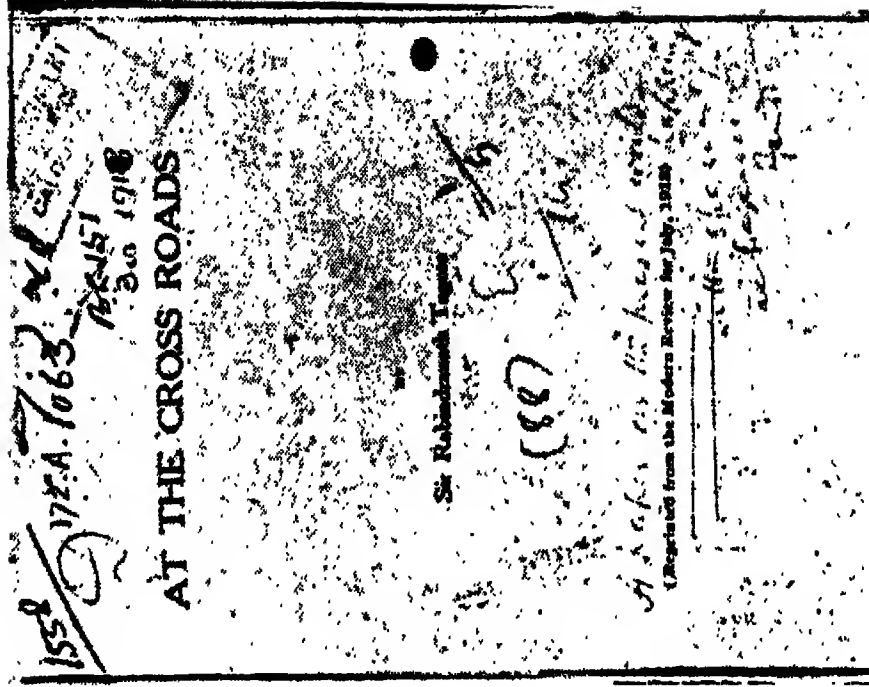
THE MODERN REVIEW FOR JULY, 1918

We have heard that Modern Russia is foundering in its bottomless abyss of idealism because she has missed the sure foothold of the stern logic of Real Politik. We know very little of the history of the present revolution in Russia, and with the scanty materials in our hands we cannot be certain if she, in her tribulations, is giving expression to man's indomitable soul against prosperity built upon moral nihilism. All that we can say is that the time to judge has not yet come, especially as Real Politik is in such a sorry plight itself. No doubt if Modern

Russia did try to adjust herself to the orthodox tradition of Nation-worship, she would be in a more comfortable situation to-day, but this tremendousness of her struggle and hopelessness of her tangles do not, in themselves, prove that she has gone astray. It is not unlikely that, as a nation, she will fail; but if she fails with the flag of true ideals in her hand, then her failure will fade, like the morning star, only to usher in the sunrise of the New Age. If India must have her ambition, let it not be to scramble for the unholy feast of the barbarism of the past night, but to take her place in the procession of the morning going on the pilgrimage of truth,—the truth of man's soul.

3. Tagore's first appreciation of Russian revolution.....the morning star to usher in the sunrise of the New Age..... (1918)

3a. Rabindranath Tagore *At the Cross Roads*. Title page of the booklet.



Dear Master and Friend.

Even a long time ago, when the books of your poetry were my favourite reading, I cherished the dream of meeting you one day.

At present not only has this dream come true, but I possess your lines which are priceless to me.

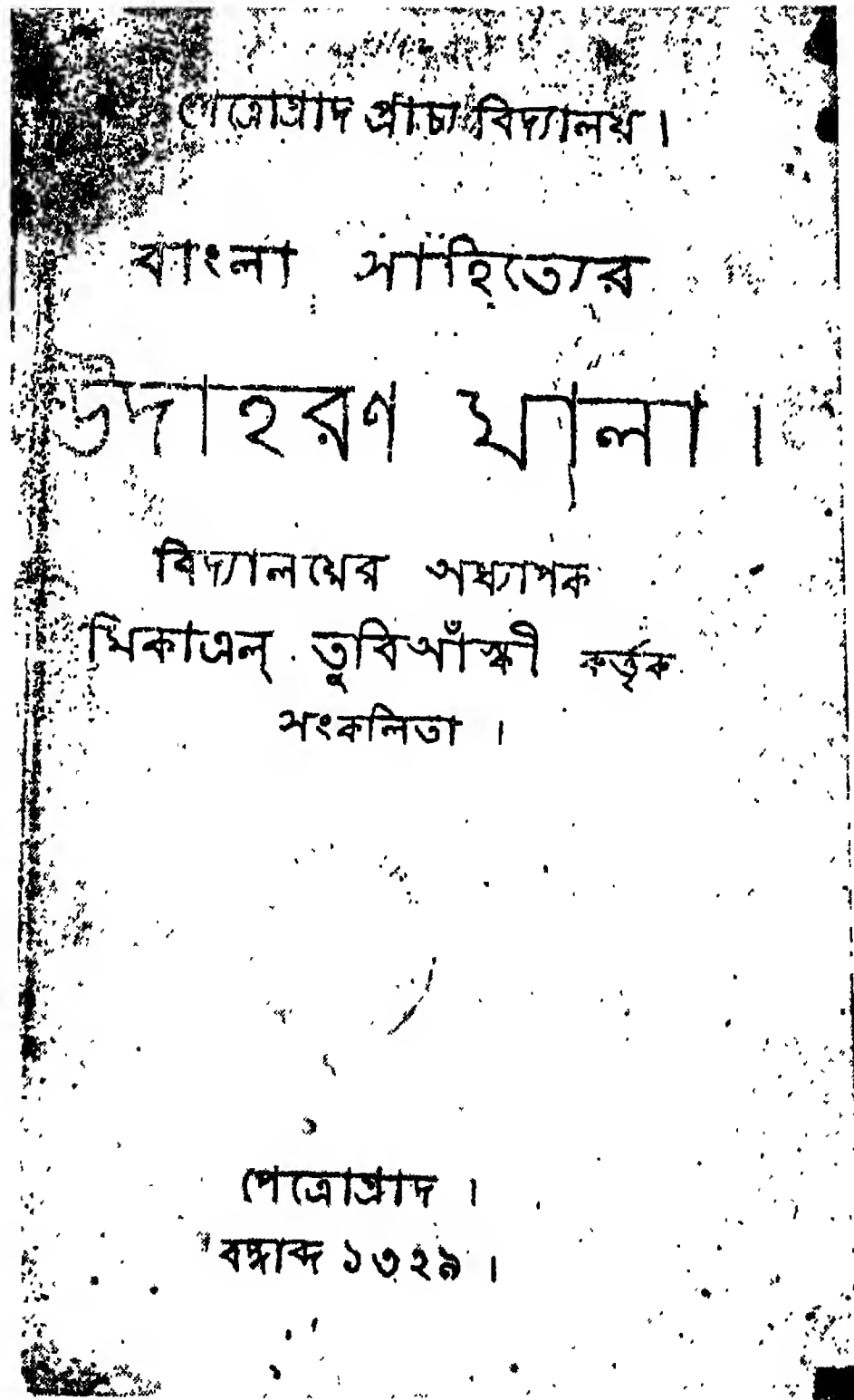
I send my heartfelt greetings and my gratefulness to you, which can express only in one of the most beautiful Russian word "Spasibo", which means "God bless you".

Yours ever

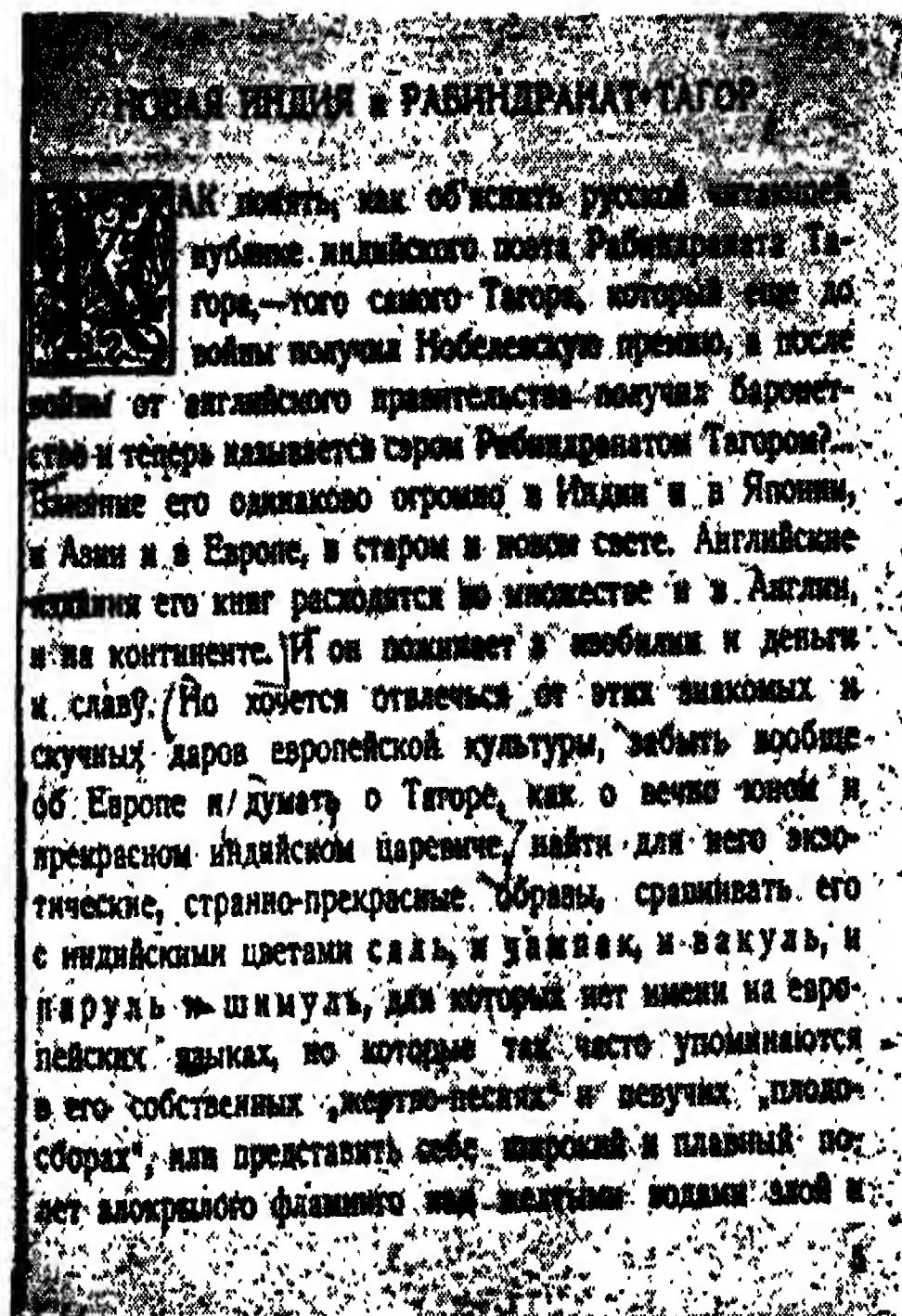
N. Roerich

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore
26 July 1920. London.

4. N. Roerich's letter to Rabindranath Tagore... this dream come true... (1920)



5. First Bengali text-book for Russians compiled by M. Tubyansky.
Title page. The title : *Specimens of Bengali Literature*. (1922)



6. Tan Bogoraz's "New India and Rabindranath Tagore" First page. ...how to explain the Indian poet Rabindranth Tagore to the Russian readers... (1922)

ЛЕНИНГРАДСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ ЖИВЫХ ВОСТОЧНЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ им. А. С. ЕВУХИНА
 INSTITUTE DES LANGUES ORIENTALES VIVANTES

Пол. почта, адрес: Ленинград, Басковская ул. 7
 Тел. 15348 и 15448



Leningrad
 March 2. 1927.

Dear Mr. Tagore.

I have much pleasure to inform you that a communiqué has recently been issued in the Russian press by Prof. Ziskovatskoi, member of Academy of Science, to the effect that you intend to leave for Russia in summer next. If it be true, will you please let me know if possible when you would be able to visit this country? The news in the press has brought me several letters from my friends enquiring about your forthcoming visit to Russia.

Just a word to let you know that I had been appointed as Lecturer on Bengal and India since 1924 at the above Institute, and during the whole period I have marked with pleasure an increasing interest in studying Indian life and culture in this country. Your presence would therefore, I hope, be of much interest to the Russians. Hope this would find you in good health and spirits. With kindest personal regards, I remain,

Oriental Inst.
 Maximilianovsky Per.
 N. 7.
 Leningrad, Soviet Russia

Sincerely yours
 D. A. Datta

7. D. A. Datta's letter to R. Tagore...your presence (in Soviet Russia) would be of much interest to the Russians... (1927)

...it is my great wish to be personally present in
 Russia... (1928)

8. Rabindranath Tagore's Letter to his nephew Saumyendranath Tagore. ...it is my great wish to be personally present in Russia... (1928)

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10. Rabindranath Trgore's Letter to his son, Rathindranath Tagore.
 Last page, 21 November, 1930.
 If you could come to (Soviet) Russia, you would have understood
 that...even a small resource can do much if one has intelligence,
 energy and faith in oneself.

Vancouver Sun
Vancouver B.C.

8 DEC 1930

Date

TAGORE STRIKES U.S. CULTURE

204
World Suffers From Western Civilization

Rabindranath Tagore, poet-philosopher of India, deals with the differences in Western and Eastern civilizations in an address given at a dinner in his honor under auspices of the Tagore Reception Committee and the India Society of America—and his findings are not much to the credit of the Western world.



"The age belongs to the West and humanity must be grateful to you for your science," he said. "But you have exploited those who are helpless and humiliated those who are unfortunate with this gift. A great portion of the world suffers from your civilization. It is your responsibility that you offer this as a gift and not make it a medium for cruel self-aggrandizement. You cannot realize how we of the East have suffered. There is between us the great barrier of your own material prosperity. I have great love and admiration for the West, not only for what I have received from it but for what it has been gathering for the future of man—its own science."

HAPPINESS LOST

"But today we know that in spite of all this wealth and prosperity you are not happy. I have not seen any sign of happiness in all the countries of the West. Your country and the countries of Europe are lost and still groping for the spiritual qualities of the East."

"Columbus set out to find the passage to India and found the American Continent. Now the West should complete the journey and complete the voyage to India."

"You have not come to India over the unknown, uncharted sea of mystery to learn the spirit of Asia. Come in the proper spirit and claim your share. The things that have eternal value belong to all humanity and to all times. Come to us, accept our knowledge and realize that we are all brothers."

11. Tagore strikes US culture. A Review of his address given on 27 November, 1930, in New York. Vancouver Sun, Vancouver B. C. 8 December, 1930. ...a great portion of the world suffers from your (Western) civilisation...you have exploited those who are

April 26, 1934.

Dear Friend,

I very much appreciate your kindness in sending me the books mentioned in your letter dated March 22, 1934 - EK/HL/2. The books, however, have not been received by me yet. It is possible they are detained by the over-vigilance of the Customs-examination authorities. However, let me thank you for having sent them.

Allow me to send through you my best wishes and humble respects to the forthcoming All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. It is kind of you to ask me for my opinion on the creation of your modern writers. I am reluctant to express my opinion regarding works which I have not had the good fortune of enjoying in the original. However, I cannot but offer my admiration, whatever its value, for the genius of such able writers as Gorky, Gladkov, Romanov, Leonov and others with whose works I may claim partial acquaintance through English translations.

My best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Rabindranath Tagore

L. Cherniavsky Esq.,

12. R. Tagore's Letter to VOKS, greeting the First Congress of Soviet Writers.

...I cannot but offer my admiration for the genius of such able writers as Gorky, Gladkov, Romanov, Leonov and others... (1934)

...of his title of Knight, enjoys an international reputation as a poet, philosopher, and authority on Indian culture. On the other hand, he came prominently to notice as an anti-partition agitator, and, since then, has been hostile to Government. He has given Bengal many of its national songs.

2. A very recent source report from Calcutta alleges that he is now more rabidly anti-Government than he ever was in the past, and states that this is apparent in a novel which he has recently published. It is alleged that this novel has extolled the revolutionary cult in Bengal. The Calcutta Special Branch review of this novel is below, together with the opinion of the Public Prosecutor, Calcutta. He has recommended the forfeiture of the book under the Press Emergency Powers Act of 1931. The view he has taken, when considered with the reaction of an agent to the book, leaves one with no doubt that its effect in Bengal must be harmful. This is what one would expect with respect to any Bengali novel in which the hero and heroine are terrorists.

3. From the police point of view it is undesirable that a man with political views such as those held by Dr. Tagore, should be asked to give the Convocation address at an Indian university. I suggest that it would be unwise to tender an invitation to an author whose latest work may be forfeited. I note, however, that a similar invitation has already been extended to him by the Aligarh University.

4. I held up this file until I received the Calcutta S.B. letter below.

23 - 1 - 1935.

13. The British Intelligence Bureau's Note of 28 January, 1935, on Tagore. ...he (Tagore) came prominently to notice as an anti-partition agitator, and, since then, has been hostile to (British India) Government...he is now more rabidly anti-Government than he ever was in the past...

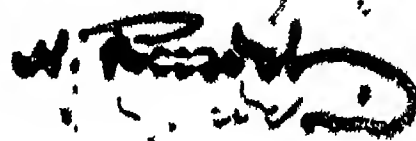
My very dear Brother in Spirit,

At a time of world distress, which we know your heart feels as deeply as ours, I am moved to send you this message of greetings with a little token of my profound friendship. May this monograph, on your Library shelves, express to you those ardent thoughts which we all constantly send you.

I often remember your significant words in your letter to me "and I almost lose faith in civilization by itself, yet we cannot give up our efforts, indeed, for Beauty, for Truth, for spiritual upliftment. For everything which is embraced within the domain of culture, we must continue to strive. If on the one hand we see a poisoning of space by shells and evil thoughts, when every word of the poet acts as a purifying panacea. "Beauty shall save the world" and this motto stands as a final goal. May the Great Forces of Light give you strength to continue your noble and beneficial work for yet many more years.

In Heart and Spirit

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore.



14. N. Roerich's Last Letter to R. Tagore 29 September, 1939. ...we must continue to strive for truth... (1939)

July 7, 1937

Dear friend,

I am thankful to you for your kind letter of 25th May which I received a few days ago but I regret that owing to my absence from my headquarters I could not reply to it earlier. It is indeed kind of you to request me to send you a contribution for your Journal and I hope to be able to send you something within the next few days. You should not forget my days of activity are wellnigh over and I write but seldom these days.

I am keeping in close touch with the affairs in your country - specially in matters cultural - through the publications of your Society and my interest in the U.S.S.R. continues unabated. Nothing will give me greater pleasure if circumstances admit of my visiting New Russia once again - my visit in 1930 was indeed a revelation.

With all good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

M. A. Arosev.

Rabindranath Tagore

July 22nd, 1936.

Dear friend,

I thank you for your letter in which you tell me of the great progress you have already made in the field of mass education, a development the beginning of which I saw during my visit to the Soviet Republic and admired and appreciated so much. Also I must thank you for your invitation to visit Moscow in 1937 to witness the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Revolution. You know I may yet be able to do so, even though I am growing old and tired of life.

Yours sincerely,

Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore

Corrado A. Stepanoff,
Starostomuchai 1412,
Moscow,
U.S.S.R.

Gang Kungpoo,
(Darjeeling).

October 6, 1939

Dear friend,

It has been most kind and thoughtful of you to have sent me such a sumptuous present; I shall treasure it in my collection.

Today I stand as much perplexed and distressed as you are with regard to the treatment of the "refugees" and the fact that the world has not yet taken through this bath of blood, but one must be too busy to think a prophesy these days.

I have come up to this quiet resort for a peaceful holiday. Civilization is now too uncomfortable, too near civilization to offer me any Santis, tourists, sight-seers, auto-graph-hunters, pressmen and others who are just living impossible for me. A kind friend has however offered me a warm shelter here and I come whenever I can afford the luxury of a little holiday.

With warmest regards,

Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore

M. A. Arosev, Esq.,

15. R. Tagore's Letter of 7 July, 1937, to the Chairman of VOKS, M. A. Arosev. ...nothing will give me greater pleasure if circumstances admit of my visiting new Russia once again. My visit in 1930 was indeed a revelation. (1937)

16. R. Tagore's Letter of 22 July, 1936 to VOKS, thanking for Invitation to Visit Moscow on 20th Anniversary of the Revolution. ...who knows I may yet be able to come... (1936)

17. R. Tagore's Last Letter of 6 October, 1930, to N. Roerich. ...today I stand as much perplexed and distressed as you are with regard to the trend of events in the West; we can but hope that the world may emerge out cleaner through this bath of blood... (1939)

РАБИНДРАНАТ ТАГОР

СОБРАНИЕ СОЧИНЕНИЙ

В ДВЕНАДЦАТИ
ТОМАХ

*Под редакцией Евг. Быковой,
А. Гкатыка-Данильчука, В. Новиковой*

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО
ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ
Москва 1961

18. R. Tagore's *Collected Works* (in Russian) In 12 Volumes. Title
Page of Volume 1. (1961)

অপারেশন

কবি সবসময় অপারেশন, তাই বুঝেনই যেই রিভোলিউশন আরম্ভ-
হয়েছে।

কবির ঘরের পিছনে শুবিকের বাগান অপারেশনের আরম্ভ।
কখন থেকেই সকলে বাত হয়ে এটা উড়ান খোঁজা শুরু করে।
অপারেশন টেকি আঁজা করে, মালা কাপড়ের পরা টাঙানো হয়েছে।
কবি কিছু আরম্ভের প্রস্তুতি, কিন্তু কবি কিছুই জানেন না, আরই তাঁকে
‘অপারেশন’ শব্দ করতে হবে। আরও তিনি জ্যোতিষকে খিজাল
করেছেন, “বাগানটা কবে করছো জোবান?” শুনার জ্যোতিষ
কলেছেন, এই কাল কি পরন্ত—এখনও টিক করনি। কনিষ্ঠবানু বেদিন
জানো বুঝবেন সেইদিনই হবে।

কি জানি, এতটা সুকোবল কি সরকার ছিল? আরও জো করে
হয়, অনিশ্চিতের চেয়ে নিশ্চিত ভাবে কিছু জানলে—তা সে বত বজা
বিপদই হোক, কবির হাতো বন সহজে মিথের সঙ্গে বোঝাপড়া করে
নিতে পারে। বসন্তের মেখেছি সে কবিতা গুঁর আছে।

আমরা গিরে তিনি সেদিন সকালেও আর-একটা কবিতা রচনা
করেছেন, রাণী কলমে করে নিয়েছে। আমরা যত চুকে মাঝে
যেতেই কলমে, “কি যে প্রশান্ত, আশ্রকের কাগজে যুদ্ধের কলমে
কি?” উনি বলছেন—একটু বেশি বয়স জামো। আশ্রকের কাগজ
পড়ে জো কলমে হবে যে বাগানটা সৈন্য আশ্রকের একটু টেকাতে
পেরেছে। খত জামোজি আর এগোতে পারছে না। শুনে
কবির মুখ মুগ্ধিত উজ্জ্বল হয়ে উঠেছে, কলমে, “পারবে, পারবে,
তুমি পারবে। জরি অহতর হয়েছি বিচারায়ে। পেরেছি,
পেরেছি—এখন সেপুক পেরেছি, কী হয়। দুখনরা।” উনি
কলমে, বাগানটা মুখই বীর্য মেখেছে, কলমে লেখে। মুখ

19. Rani Mahalanobis : Memoirs—*Baishe Shravana*, p 225. He (Tagore) exclaimed : *They (the Russians) can, they can, only they can ! . . . the Russians are showing unprecedented heroism.*

(30 July, 1941)

**CHAPTER
ONE**

THE BACKGROUND

For me Kalidasa is as great as Homer.

N. M. KARAMZIN (1792)

In the Soviet Union Rabindranath Tagore is one of the most loved and most widely read writers of world literature. His works are always published in very large number of copies¹ and are, upon publication, immediately sold out. And this not only after the Revolution, Russia, as we shall presently see, has always had an unabated interest in Tagore right from the beginning which picked up high momentum in the Soviet period when more and more translations began to be made from original Bengali.

The reason for this universal interest of Russian and Soviet reader in Rabindranath lies not simply in the very high creative talent of the writer or in the non-transient character of his work or his perennial "modernness". For the Soviet reader, Rabindranath Tagore most certainly is a writer and a personality of the same towering heights as, say, Shakespeare, Goethe, Pushkin, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky.

The reason is to be sought in the chronicle of bygone times. in the vast, abiding interest and curiosity which the peoples of Russia, both Russian and of other nationalities, from times immemorial, had in India, in her great, unique culture.

Accordingly, before we come to the translation and study of Tagore's works in Russia and Soviet Union in their historical perspective, we must, evidently enough, review the whole background, and go back to the sources and history of this interest in India, in her vast philosophical and literary heritage², of which the so great popularity of Tagore in USSR is only but a consequence and a climax.

The history of study of India in Russia usually goes back to the *Voyage Beyond the Three Seas*, the work of Afanasii Nikitin, a native of Tver³, in Russia, who journeyed to India in the 15th century, before Vasco-da-Gama. True to this tradition, we shall first cite, in short, some data on him :

Year of birth unknown, died 1474. Russian traveller and writer. In 1469 he arrived in the city of Hormuz (Iran)

and travelled across the Arabian Sea to India where he lived for about three years, journeying extensively.... During his travels Nikitin carefully studied the people, social order, government, economy, religion, daily life and, to some extent, the natural features of India. He describes his travels in *Voyage Beyond the Three Seas*, an outstanding work attesting to Nikitin's broad range of interests and opinions that were advanced for his time. It is an important classic of ancient Russian literature and has been translated into many languages. The abundance and accuracy of the factual material made Nikitin's work a valuable source of information on India⁴

Before giving an account of the visit to India in 1785-97 of another wonderful Russian, a traveller, scholar, musician and stage director, and also the first Russian Indologist (in the proper sense of the word), Gerasim Lebedev (1749-1817), we shall briefly mention the books on India, published in Russia already in the 18th century.

The establishment in 1725 of a Russian Academy of Sciences upon a decree issued by Peter I, and the work of the distinguished 18th century Russian savant and writer, M. V. Lomonosov (1711-1765), had a very important role in the development of modern Russian science, including Indology. Lomonosov, in particular, was the first to moot the idea of the need for setting up a special institute for the study of the Orient.⁵

But some books giving accounts of India were published even earlier⁶; and, in 1728-29, some articles of T. S. Bayer on Indian (Brahmana), Tangut and Mongolian literatures⁷ were published in Latin (the language of the intellectual elite of that time) in the Scientific Transactions of the just established Academy of Sciences. In 1738 was published another book of his—on the history of Graeco-Bactrian kingdom,⁸ containing much interesting information on India.

One of the main works of St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences was the *Comparative Dictionary of World Languages*, in two volumes (1790-1791)⁹, compiled by Academician Pyotr Pallas.

Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin write in their authentic work on *Image of India in USSR* that "his [Pallas'] remarkable work...opened a new epoch of linguistic studies... [It] contains information about Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindustani and Multani as well as the Telugu, Malayalam and Singhalese languages."¹⁰ The reader at large read with great interest F. S. Efremov's book on his travels in Central Asia, Persia and India (1771-1782), published in several editions and even reprinted in our days.¹¹

The Russian readers, keeping a close watch on all that was being published on India in the Western Europe, paid immediate attention to the first translations of Sanskrit literature. Thus, Wilkins' translation (1785) of the *Bhagavadgita* was published in A. A. Petrov's Russian translation in 1788 by the Moscow University publishing house.¹²

The year 1792 was eventful because this year was published a complete translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, made by the outstanding historian and poet of that time, Nikolai Karamzin, the friend and preceptor of the great Russian poet A. S. Pushkin.¹³

The publication of this book was a landmark in the cultural life of Russia of that time.

Captivated by Kalidasa's work, N. M. Karamzin wrote about it inspired lines. He specially stressed that works of genius could be created not in Europe alone.

In his Preface to *Sakuntala*, he writes :

The creative spirit does not live in Europe alone ; it is a citizen of the universe. A human being is everywhere a human being ; everywhere he has a sensitive heart, and in the mirror of his imagination he holds both heaven and earth ; everywhere nature is his preceptor and the chief source of his pleasures. I felt this most ardently, while reading *Sakuntala*, the drama written in Indian language by Kalidasa, the poet from Asia, and translated of late into English by William Jones. Almost on every page of this drama I have found the most beauteous forms of poetry, subtle feelings, an exquisite and ineffable tenderness like the still, soft wind of May, the purest, inimitable nature and great art. Besides, this drama may be called a fine picture of ancient India just as the poems

of Homer are of ancient Greece. In it one may see the character, customs and manners of the peoples of those times. For me Kalidasa is as great as Homer. They both got their brush from the hands of nature, and both painted nature.¹⁴

Now to Gerasim Lebedev. Having arrived in Calcutta in 1787 from Madras (where he studied Dravidian languages), Gerasim Lebedev decided to take up at once the study of local languages. But it took him two years to find a teacher, Golaknath Das, who started teaching him Bengali language, the Calcutta dialect of Hindustani and also the elementaries of Sanskrit in exchange for lessons in European music. Lebedev was convinced that "the East India, besides its abundance and treasures upon which not only Europe but perhaps the whole world gazes with envious eyes, is that Primary part of the world from which, according to the testimony of diverse writers, the human race spread across the face of the earthly circle ; owing to which the national Shanscrit language bears most palpable affinity in its rules not only with many Asiatic but also with European languages."¹⁵ Lebedev did not confine himself to the study of languages alone. He studied intensively Indian cosmogony, mythology, literature, arithmetic, astronomy, Bengali literature of his time and also Indian customs and manners.¹⁶

As Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin rightly note, "relations between Europeans and Indian scholars were at that time extremely difficult because of prejudices of both sides. But the Russian musician quickly reached understanding with the Indians, thanks to his benevolence and deep respect for them, in so far as he, as he himself wrote, "paid due tribute to their knowledge. Relations with the Indians were quite close and Lebedev displayed a keen interest in his own contemporaries, the Bengalis and their culture."¹⁷

Golaknath Das introduced him to a wide circle of Bengali intelligentsia of Calcutta. Lebedev possibly was the first Russian who knew and was perhaps friendly with Rabindranath Tagore's ancestors who were even then playing a prominent role in the cultural life of Calcutta.¹⁸

Gerasim Lebedev learnt Bengali so well that he capably translated into Russian the first part of *Bidya Sundar*, the

important work of the celebrated 18th century Bengali poet, Bharat Chandra Ray. This translation was the first into Russian made directly from Bengali.¹⁹ Lebedev included Bharat Chandra's songs²⁰ in the two plays translated by him from English into Bengali under the title *The Disguise*, specially for the Bengali audience.²¹ The performances took place on 27 November 1795 and 21 March 1796 and had an immediate success.²² Lebedev is rightly considered the founder of modern Bengali theatre, and his contribution to the development of Indian stage art is held in high esteem in modern India.

The success of the performances aroused bitter jealousy and created confusion amongst the British colonial circles. The theatre was burnt, and no efforts were spared to stop the theatre from functioning. In 1797 Lebedev was forced to leave India.²³ With great difficulty he was able to reach the Russian legacy in London. In England he was able to publish the Grammar of the Calcutta dialect of Hindustani, which has not lost its significance till this day.²⁴

Lebedev returned home in 1801, but only to be disappointed. The affairs of the Academy were in the hands of its President, Baron Nikolai, who had hardly anything to do with academic work, and was unable to comprehend Lebedev's great contribution to Russian Indology. Even when the Czar signed a decree that Gerasim Lebedev be appointed as Professor of Oriental languages at the Academy, this Baron Nikolai was able to get the decree nullified on the fictitious plea that the Academy had no scholars competent enough to assess Lebedev's academic level.²⁵

Lebedev therefore had to take up service in the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Affairs Collegium and bear the burden of a Government official right up to the end of his life. However, with financial grant from the treasury, he was able to set up a printing press, the first in Europe to have Bengali and Sanskrit types, and print there his book *An Impassioned Account of the Brahmanical Systems of Eastern India Brahmins, Their Sacred Rites and National Customs* (1805).²⁶

The first half of the book told of the mythology of the Indians, their cosmogonic conceptions and beliefs. The second part was devoted to a detailed description of the Indian calendar and astronomy. The third part was primarily about sacred rites, temples, popular customs and festivals. As opined by

In any case, despite all efforts to receive permission from the Czarist officials for the printing of his works, these nevertheless remained in a manuscript form, and much of this manuscript heritage has even obviously been lost. This includes such important works as Grammar of Bengali language, Bengali-Russian dictionary, a Bengali-Hindustani-Russian conversational book.²⁸ Such books began to be published in the Soviet Union only in the 20's of the 20th century, that is, after almost over a century (!).

He, the first of the sons of Russia,
Went to Eastern India,
Took the Indian manners and
 customs
And brought to Russia their
 language²⁹.

This also is partly one of the reasons as to why Tagore's writings came to be known in Russia late, that is, after about forty years of the publication of his first works. The study and teaching of modern Indian languages and literatures began in Russia only after the October Revolution of 1917, particularly after V. I. Lenin signed the decree about the opening, in Petrograd [Leningrad] and Moscow, of Institutes of Modern Oriental Languages. The first scholar to start teaching Bengali

language in early 20's and the first translator of Bengali literature (after G. Lebedev), including also R. Tagore's poems and stories, directly from the original was the young M. I. Tubyansky, the pupil of the famous F. I. Shcherbatskoi, thus restoring the link broken by the narrow-minded officials of the Czar.³²

Another dream of Lebedev has also now come true. While striving to establish Indo-Russian cultural ties, he believed that he was doing only what the Russian people had always aspired for.³³ Now when India has become independent, the Indo-Soviet cultural relations are continually developing, thus continuing the work of Lebedev and also of Minaev, Vereshchagin, Shcherbatskoi and other Russian friends of India who were able to come to this country, then so distant though so close in spirit.

And it is not just accidental that the work of G. Lebedev, a pioneer in the study of India on scientific lines and in bringing the peoples of India and Russia together, is now a subject of deep study in both these countries. Both in the USSR as well as in India, numerous works have been published and dissertations submitted on Lebedev;³⁴ and he, in our days, at last, has won the place he deserved.

* * *

Notwithstanding the indifference of the Czarist government which stood in the way of Lebedev's bringing forth his academic work, the potential of the interest in India was so high that the Russian Indology did gradually gather momentum and force. The Russian scholars and Russian public continued to follow attentively all that was being published in the West on India. An important landmark in the growth of Indological studies, and of the study of the Orient in general was the establishment in 1818 of an Asiatic Museum, a scientific institution (of the type of the Asiatic Society) under the St. Petersburg's Academy of Sciences. Later, it became a base for the present-day Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. It should be noted that "the Asiatic Museum is one of the oldest establishments for Oriental studies in Europe... We would point out that the Asiatic Society in Paris (*Société Asiatique*) was founded in 1822, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in 1829, and the German Oriental Studies Society (*Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft*) in the 1840s."³⁵

There existed plans for establishing a still larger scientific establishment for the study of the East. These plans were worked out as far back as in 1810 by S.S. Uvarov, then President of the Academy of Sciences but later the Minister of Public Education in Russia.³⁶ Unfortunately, these plans were disrupted by the war with Napoleon and later also by some other circumstances.

Uvarov's suggestion was to have an Asiatic Academy with departments countrywise and languagewise. The plan envisaged great attention to the study of India, her culture and literature, because the "Indian literature was more ancient, more interesting and the least studied." Uvarov also suggested introducing the teaching of Sanskrit and the familiarity of students with Devanagari and Bengali scripts.³⁷

In 1818 Oriental languages began to be taught in the Pedagogical Institute, soon transformed into St. Petersburg University. Uvarov delivered a long speech at the opening of the Oriental languages courses.³⁸ He spoke of the importance of studying the East, the "cradle of world culture". India was regarded as the most important of Asian countries. "Sanskrit," Uvarov stated, "is, without doubt, the most important sphere of all, it surpasses all known languages in the world". "The literature of India," he said, "is the first, the most important and the most extensive of all Oriental literatures." He considered the Indians to be "the most educated nation in Asia" and that acquaintance with Sanskrit literature must have a beneficial effect on Russian literature.³⁹

However, though a systematic and broad teaching of Sanskrit in the Russian universities could be started only in the 40's of the 19th century, quite a great deal of important research work was done on India in the 20's-30's of that century, mainly within the Academy of Sciences. Groups of Sanskrit specialists were also trained at this time,— the forerunners of the progress of Russian Indology in 40's-50's of the 19th century.

Here we shall give a short, concise survey of the principal attainments of Russian Indology, based on the already quoted work of Dr. G. Bongard-Levin, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and Dr. V. Vigasin.⁴⁰

One of the most important works published in these years was the *Review of Literature in the Sanskrit language* (1830) written by F. Adelung (1768-1843).⁴¹ He described about 350 works and referred to 170 Indian authors. Over many decades it remained a reference book for Sanskrit scholars.

In 1829 B. Dorn (1805-1881) began to teach Sanskrit in the University of Kharkov (Ukraine). This was the first experience of the teaching of Sanskrit in Russia. In 1838 Dorn moved from Kharkov to St. Petersburg where until 1842 he taught Sanskrit in the Asiatic Department.

Dorn's most important work was *On the Kinship of the Slavonic and Sanskrit Languages* (1833).⁴² His work was in the mainstream of the scientific interests of Russian scholars. He paid particular attention to the comparison of the grammatical structure of languages. Dorn compared the Slavonic languages and Sanskrit to "two branchy trunks of one mighty tree".⁴³

For organising the teaching of Sanskrit in Russia, the young scholar R. Lenz (1808-1836) was sent abroad,⁴⁴ during these days on a decision of the Academy of Sciences. His success in the study of Sanskrit was highly appreciated by his teachers—the outstanding Sanskrit scholars of the West, Professor F. Bopp (Berlin) and Professor H. Wilson (Oxford). R. Lenz brought out abroad a scientific edition of Kalidasa's drama *Urvasi* (1832)⁴⁵ and published in London a review (1835) of the first volume of the Sanskrit Encyclopaedia, *Sabda-kalpa-drum*, by the Indian scholar, Radhakanta Dev, the first Indian to be made the Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (in 1858).⁴⁶ Besides Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, he also studied Bengali, Hindi and spoken Hindustani.⁴⁷ On his return to St. Petersburg in 1835 he became a specialist in Hindi and Sanskrit at the Academy of Sciences, but prematurely died in 1836, at the age of 28. His one-time pupil Professor P. Ya. Petrov (1814-1875) actually began teaching Sanskrit in Russia.⁴⁸ He translated direct from Sanskrit into Russian, mainly excerpts from the *Mahabharata*.⁴⁹ Like Lenz also he was sent abroad where he studied not only Sanskrit texts but also the Avestan language (Zend) and contemporary Bengali.⁵⁰ We would like to mention here that the great Russian poet A. S. Pushkin (1799-1837) also was interested in classical ancient Indian literature.

Ramayana, the work of Valmiki, was mentioned by him in his correspondence with the Russian philosopher Chaadaev.⁵¹

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The next milestone in the study of India in Russia is the expansion of teaching of Sanskrit in Russian universities. The first such department was opened in 1841 at the University of Kazan, one of the oldest and largest universities in Russia.⁵² Professor Petrov was invited to teach Sanskrit here, and he became the Head of the Sanskrit Department.

Thanks to links with the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the University received publications from Calcutta.⁵³ In 1851-52, a Department of Sanskrit was opened in Moscow University and Petrov became a professor of the University and taught Sanskrit there practically up to his death.

In the last years of his life he published a long series of articles containing a detailed survey of Bengali, Hindustani and Marathi (1867-1870).⁵⁴ In these articles he gave information about the grammar of modern Indian languages, their correlation with Sanskrit, and presented an outline of literature in these languages. It was the first scholarly work on modern Indian languages and literatures after Lebedev's.

In 1855 an Oriental Languages Faculty was opened in St. Petersburg University with a Department of Sanskrit. Up to the present time this Faculty (now of Leningrad University) is the main centre of Sanskrit studies in Russia (now USSR). It is connected with scholarly and pedagogical work of such professors and scholars with world-fame as I. P. Minaev (1840-1890), F. I. Shcherbatskoi (1866-1942), S. F. O'ldenburg (1863-1934) whose contributions constitute a whole event not only in Russian but also in world Indology. The teaching of Sanskrit was first entrusted to Professor K. Kossovich (1814-1883), another notable pioneer of Russian Sanskrit studies. His first translations from Sanskrit were published in 1844.⁵⁵ One of his most important publications was the translation of the drama by Krishna Misra '*Prabodhacandrodaya*' (1847). He stated that "Sanskrit was a model of a language with the most complete forms and a most perfect structure, a model of perfection of human speech. . ." Kossovich referred to the "organic relationship between Sanskrit and Slavonic languages". He concluded that Russia needed Sanskrit scholars just as much as she

needed mathematicians and historians".⁵⁶ K. A. Kossovich compiled the first Sanskrit-Russian Dictionary published in 1854-56.⁵⁷ The most important Sanskrit research at that time was carried out in the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, associated primarily with Otto von Boehtlingk (1815-1904). He was a native of St. Petersburg, a graduate of St. Petersburg University. His main work was the great St. Petersburg Sanskrit Dictionary published in seven volumes in 1852-1875, compiled jointly with Professor Rudolf Roth.⁵⁸ They were helped by many leading Sanskrit scholars. G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin say that "the Dictionary opened a new scientific era in Sanskrit studies. . . . In spite of the fact that more than a century has gone by . . . the St. Petersburg Dictionary remains an unsurpassed publication".⁵⁹ After finishing work on the Great St. Petersburg Dictionary he undertook to prepare the concise St. Petersburg Dictionary which also appeared in seven large-sized volumes from 1879 to 1889. The Dictionaries are widely known in India, and in 1923 the USSR Academy of Sciences sent to Rabindranath Tagore, at his request, a copy of the Great St. Petersburg Dictionary".⁶⁰

In 1856 outstanding Indian scholar Radhakanta Dev (later elected an honorary member of St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences) sent to the Academy a gift copy of his seven-volume Dictionary of Sanskrit.⁶¹

In the fifties the attention of the Russian public at large was specially drawn towards the study of Sanskrit in the context of the growing movement for upholding the identity of Russian culture usually known as Slavophile movement. Its protagonists wanted due attention to be paid to the national heritage, that is, to national, folk songs and customs, the history of the Slavonic peoples and were against blind imitation of Western Europe. The movement also spurred the interest in the ancient sources of Slav culture.

This interest naturally brought to the fore the question of relationship of old Russia with other old civilisations of the world, specially India, including the question of akinness of Russian and Sanskrit languages. Russian scholars were

interested in this problem long before.⁶² One name which deserves mention here in this connection is that of Alexei Khomyakov, one of the pioneers and major representatives of Slavophilism, who was greatly interested in Sanskrit.

Inspired by Alexei Khomyakov, a young Russian, Alexander Hilferding, known for his good work on identifying and collecting Russian folk songs, started learning Sanskrit at the Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg University, under Kaetan Kossovich. Later, in 1853, this promising scholar published a paper "*On the Relation of the Slavonic Language to Cognate Languages*".⁶³ A year later, he published a detailed study "*On the Relationship of the Slavonic Languages to Sanskrit*." A. Khomyakov himself published a book under the title *A Comparison of Russian and Sanskrit Words*. Seeing the great importance of this theme of akinness of Russian and Sanskrit languages, we quote here, in full, an account of these works given by G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin :

The general ideas developed in Hilferding's works amounted to the following : German linguists, engaged in Indo-European studies, underestimated the importance of the Slavonic languages... 'The language of the Slavs in all its dialects has preserved roots and words which exist in Sanskrit,' he wrote. In this respect the closeness of the languages is singular... No European language has so many words similar to Sanskrit as the Slavonic language.' He asserted that it was hardly possible to find one or two dozen Russian words that did not have similar ones in Sanskrit. Comparing vocabularies, Hilferding came to the conclusion that only Lithuanian and Slavonic languages were close to Sanskrit and that they formed a family within the framework of the Indo-European community... In conclusion the author said : Slavs... alone preserve the freshness of thought and creativity of spirit that comes from the Indo-European cradle. Khomyakov's book ... was written in the same spirit. In the author's opinion there remained 'from the beautiful epoch of mankind's childhood, Indian thought and the Slavonic way of life.' The Indians and the Slavs are "brothers, who reveal their brotherhood in complete identity of their verbal forms and the logical harmony of their development from common roots". To a Russian, Sanskrit words sound familiar, and

we are surprised not only by the number of familiar words, but by the fact that there are some unfamiliar words in Sanskrit.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, this problem has not been adequately elaborated in the later studies though it has been the concern of eminent representatives of Russian creative intelligentsia, for instance, the great Russian artist and thinker N.K. Roerich (1874-1947), as we shall be mentioning here later. In our days this problem has been brought into focus by the distinguished scholar and philologist of India, Suniti Kumar Chatterji. Some aspects of the cultural akinness of proto-Slavs and ancient Indians have been touched by the distinguished Soviet specialist on the ancient history of Russia, and on Slavonic studies, Academician B. A. Rybakov, in his fundamental works devoted to paganism of ancient Slavs. Most clearly and with due regard to the latest achievements of science, this idea has been developed in the recent works of the outstanding Soviet linguist Professor Oleg Trubachev.

According to him "a whole series of names of ancient Black Sea regions have a great deal in common, which can be explained by Indian onomastic data. He even considers it possible to seek 'the beginnings of Hinduistic faiths' in the period when the 'Indo-Aryans inhabited the Black Sea regions' and speaks of the 'intensive cultural and ethnic ties and 'bilateral communications' between the Black Sea regions and India in the distant part".⁶⁵

G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin also write that "in any case, the origin of the Indo-Aryans is bound up with pre-history of what is now the European part of the USSR and with that of some regions of Central Asia. Community of origin and a long period of living together by the Indo-Aryans and the remote ancestors of the Slavs explain the closeness of Indian and Slav mythologies".⁶⁶

The Russian public also attentively followed the work of Indian enlighteners of the last century and the events then taking place there. In 1845 the Russian popular journal 'Otechestvennye Zapiski' [Notes from the Homeland] published an article, giving a very sympathetic account of the work of

Rammohan Roy, the great enlightner of India of late 18th and early 19th century.⁶⁷

In 1847 the journal "Biblioteka dlya chteniya" [Library for Reading] published an extensive article on Dwarkanath Tagore (1795-1846), the close friend and follower of Rammohan Roy, and the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore.⁶⁸ The author begins his article with the problem of penetration of English language and European culture into India, and discusses among other things how "the European Brahmins, Bopp and Schlegel penetrated into the Vedas, when the young Brahmins from the banks of the Ganges studied Shakespeare and Byron, Gibbons and Hume."⁶⁹ The author of the article then gives a brief account of Rammohan Roy. "The first, ardent reformer was Rammohan Roy who died in England in 1833. All the reward he got for his efforts was endless suffering. First, his caste society rejected him, then the family. His wife and children also left him, because, for them, association with an 'impure' person would have meant losing the privilege of belonging to the caste and the rights thus enjoyed. The missionaries, out of annoyance and shame that their grand speeches over so many years did not find a fertile soil amongst the educated Hindus, started torturing the poor Rammohan with all sorts of arguments that he had nothing to gain by standing on the mid-road and should at once adopt Christianity.... Their 'concern' did not bear fruit, and, in their eyes, Rammohan even became a much greater 'monster' than he was in the eyes of the Hindus. He continued to follow his own path. On the advice of friends, he decided to go to England to have a first-hand idea of the academic institutions there and to see what improvements could be made in the Indian schools, and what institutions could be shifted from the West to the East. The Brahmin died on the way. Of all his young friends none was so faithful to him as Dwarkanath Tagore."⁷⁰

Further on, the author notes the practical nature of the efforts of Dwarkanath Tagore who expected principal gains for India from the development of railways, and then goes on to give biographical details on him: "From 1813 he devoted himself to industrial undertakings, built in 1821... factories and purchased a big ship, 'Resolution'.... In 1822 he accepted the invitation of the Government to hold an important position in the Salt Department. Later he refused the offer,

because his independent position was more suited to his temperament and plans. He ran a trading house in Calcutta, mainly with a view to set an example for his countrymen. His royal hospitality, his participation in all charitable and other institutions and in all work for noble cause won him universal respect. *It would be difficult to find another person in India, no matter what his caste, creed or craft, who had done so much for the progress and happiness of his countrymen, as Dwarkanath* (emphasis mine-author). In England, as in the land of the Ganges, thousands of people stood obliged by his noble acts... In 1838 he donated to the Calcutta Charitable Society 10,000 Pound Sterlings as an aid to the sick and the blind. In the Medical College he made provision for some annual prizes and often sent young Hindus for higher studies in England at his cost...⁷¹

The author of the article specially stresses Dwarkanath's struggle against the age-old hackneyed, outlived customs. "He showed the greatest zeal when it came to fighting the prejudices of his dissenters ; he was also one of the foremost fighters against the monstrous custom of burning of widows.

Soon after the death of Rammohan Roy, his friends and followers requested Dwarkanath himself to continue the tasks which had cost his friend his life. He accepted forthwith, but, because of his family circumstances and business interests, had to postpone his trip [to England] to the spring of 1842... The moment he left India, efforts became afoot to cast aspersions on him... to sidetrack him completely, and a majority of his relatives decided to sever all connections with him....

Nevertheless Dwarkanath travelled in the company of his young nephew. He did not like Italy : 'a beautiful land, a wonderful land, if only there were no ignorance and poverty there.' I never thought one could meet ignorant people and beggars in Europe. He liked Germany far more ; only the constant festivals and concerts did not find favour with him...⁷²

Specially interesting was his programme of bringing India closer to modern science ; and this the author cites as an interview to one Munich paper : "Most of all we need public schools, good teachers and particularly the teaching of works on natural history, geography, mathematics and history in

modern Indian languages and dialects (emphasis mine—author).”⁷³

This last observation made by Dwarkanath is particularly interesting ; it shows that he could foresee the fleeting character of English education in the context of future India.

The author continues to quote Dwarkanath’s words : “When it is possible for us to send every year a hundred and fifty young Brahmins to your universities [that is, in Europe], and when upon being educated on the European model, they return home and educate their . . . countrymen, then India will again become great and prosperous, as it was in the past. . . .”⁷⁴

Towards the end of the article, the author writes about Dwarkanath’s arrival in England, about the formal reception accorded to him there, including also by the queen and that the “vast city of London made an overpowering impression on him.” The author further mentions that, on receiving the news of the impending bankruptcy of the Calcutta banking house in which he had interests (this was the result of the craftiness of some of his British partners) Dwarkanath returned to Calcutta. The author mentions how Dwarkanath was welcomed back with due respect and quotes the interesting statements he made there at the solemn meeting arranged in his honour. “It were not the paintings, statues and places I saw, which aroused my sense of wonder, but the steam engines, tunnels and railways. The main obstacles in introducing such things in our country are the religious prejudices of the people, which must be removed. In India a man of high caste regards it a sin to saw a piece of wood in two halves ; how then can one achieve skill in art ?”⁷⁵ These statements show Dwarkanath’s keen insight in going deep into the roots of the problem faced by India and also his great concern about the future of his country.

These ideas of Dwarkanath were all the more interesting for the Russian reader because Russia at that time was also faced with many such problems.

Russian society keenly followed the great national uprising in India in 1857-1859 which was reported in detail in the Russian press. The Indian uprising occupied the minds of Russian revolutionaries and democrats. The well-known Russian revolutionary democrat and journalist, Nikolai Dobrolybov, devoted a long article to the Indian uprising. He disagreed with the general opinion about the uprising as given out in the British

Press. He said that it was not a revolt against civilization but a revolt against the British method of applying civilization to India.⁷⁶

The founder of the modern school of Russian Indology and Buddhist studies I.P. Minaev (1840-1890) devoted his whole life to the study of the East, above all, of India and Indian culture. He had a deep respect for the achievements of the Indian people and believed in early independence of India⁷⁷ and, after G. Lebedev, he was the first to revive direct cultural contacts between the two countries.

After graduating from the St. Petersburg University he continued his Indological studies in Germany, England and France. He became an assistant Professor (1869) and then Professor (1873) at St. Petersburg University and in 1883 replaced K. Kossovich and taught Sanskrit at that University. He was the first in Russia to introduce the teaching of Prakrit.

His scholarly interests were unusually varied. The historical vision is inherent in all his works. He said : "The essence of any spiritual development reveals itself to us in the entirety of its historical development and can be understood only when the process is traced back to the beginning and in this way its sources are revealed."⁷⁸

Minaev laid the foundation for Buddhist studies in Russia. His principal work is *Buddhism : Researches and Materials* (1887).⁷⁹ He presented a comprehensive history of Buddhism and its cultural and historic influence on the peoples of the East. His research on the chronology and relation of the canonic works of Buddhism, the Mahayana and the Hinayana, had a significant impact on the development of international Buddhist studies.

Minaev wrote a general survey of the most important relics of Sanskrit literature which was the first such detailed resume of the literature of ancient India in Russia (1880).⁸⁰ This survey is up to this day a text-book for the students of Russian universities.

His dissertation on the phonetics and morphology of the Pali language (1872) is an enormous contribution to world Indology.⁸¹

Among Minaev's works on modern India his writings on the early national-liberation movement in India are of particular importance. In his *Studies of Ceylon and India* (1872) he described in detail the different trends of social movements in 19th century India—among them the currents in the Brahmo Samaj and especially the deeds and ideas of Rabindranath Tagore's father, the outstanding philosopher and social worker Debendranath Tagore.⁸²

In his speech in St. Petersburg University "On the Study of India in Russian Universities" (1884) he emphasized the particular importance of studying in Russia not only ancient but also modern India.⁸³

To I.P. Minaev goes the great credit of establishing direct contacts and exchange of academic material between the St. Petersburg University and prominent research organisations and scholars of India. On Minaev's initiative, the Russian Academy of Sciences, in 1888, nominated the outstanding Indian historian Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar an honorary member.⁸⁴

Of particularly great importance in the establishment of direct contacts between Russian and Indian scholars are I.P. Minaev's visits to India in quest of materials, specially on Buddhism. He made three trips, visiting India, Ceylon and Burma (1874-75, 1880, 1885-86).

After Gerasim Lebedev, I.P. Minaev was the first scholar to visit India for study and research. The numerous manuscripts and books collected by him during his journeys, including those in Bengali, and donated to the Asiatic Museum and the Library of the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University, have formed the basic collection for the work of the subsequent generations of scholars and students.

While in India, Minaev, besides his principal academic work, devoted much time to visiting research establishments (including the Asiatic Society of Bengal)⁸⁵ and educational institutions, meeting native scholars and students, and reading and contributing research papers and reports. He came to know many distinguished scholars and social leaders,— for example, the outstanding historian and scholar of Buddhist studies, Haraprasad Sastri⁸⁶, later a friend of Rabindranath Tagore ; the great Bengali writer, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894).⁸⁷ Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's books, presented with his

signatures to Minaev, are available in the Library of the Leningrad University.

Minaev received all welcome and attention everywhere. "The kindness of the Bengalis towards me always surprised me. This kindness is extended to the Russians and not to me personally. With what curiosity do the Bengalis regard the Russians,"⁸⁸ he wrote in his Diary. "Curiosity" was quite natural; not many Russian scholars came to colonial India. After Minaev, in 1910, came F. I. Shcherbatskoi. And again what troubles did Nikolai Roerich not have in the 20's before the British powers permitted him to stay in India.

No matter where Minaev was, no matter what monuments of antiquity he was studying, he always found himself in the thick of events in the India of his day. write G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin.⁸⁹ Minaev was present at the first session of the Indian National Congress held at Bombay in 1885 and was personally known to several distinguished leaders of the Congress.⁹⁰

Pre-timely death cut short the life of this remarkable man. But he did what his predecessors could not; he left behind him a brilliant school of Indologists, the pride of Russian scholarship, like Th. Stcherbatsky [F. I. Shcherbatskoi (1866-1942)], S. F. Ol'denburg (1863-1934), and many others.

We cannot sum up this discussion without also stating that I. P. Minaev was personally known to the great Russian writer. Leo Tolstoy, and discussed with him the complex problems of Buddhist philosophy.⁹¹ Tolstoy, who, during these years, and right to the end of his life, kept up his systematic and profound study of Indian philosophy and literature, continued and developed, as none else of his contemporaries did after Minaev, the contacts with Indian social leaders, climaxing in his correspondence with the future leader of the Indian national liberation movement, Mahatma Gandhi. But we shall come to this later.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) In Russia and in the Soviet Union Tagore's works have all along been published in large number of copies.

Before the Revolution, the number of copies printed

of each of Tagore's writings was usually 2,000 to 3,000, a figure most optimum for that time.

In the Soviet period, the number of copies printed in the 20's was around 5,000, again maximum for that time.

The 8-volume (1955-57) and 12-volume (1961-65) editions of Tagore's works in Russian were printed in an impression of 90,000.

The number of copies printed of individual works was even still higher—for example, *Rasskazy* [Short Stories, M., 1955]—2,40,000 copies; *Peschinka* [Eyesore, M., 1959]—1,50,000 copies and so on.

See V.A. Novikova : *Translations of Works of R. Tagore into Russian and other Languages of Peoples of USSR ; A Bibliography (in Russian)*, in "Uchenye Zapiski LGU" [Scientific Transactions of the Leningard State University, No. 294, L., 1961].

Despite such large number of copies printed, Tagore's works have ever remained out of stock in the book market. It is of interest to note here that even the President of the All Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Professor F. N. Petrov, complained of this when, during Tagore's visit to the Soviet Union in September 1930, he wanted to present to him a complete set of his works in Russian (See Tagore's talk with F. N. Petrov on 24.9.1930 in the book *Rabindranath Tagore : Friend of the Soviet Union* [in Russian]; M., 1961, p. 82).

- (2) For example, this is described in detail in the recently published authentic book *The Image of India : The Study of Ancient Indian Civilisation in the USSR* (Moscow, Progress, 1984), by Dr. G. Bongard-Levin, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and Dr. A. Vigasin. [Hereafter we shall refer to this book as II].

This book will be a vital reference tool for those interested in the subject.

We have taken a lot of material from this book, which we shall be acknowledging in the footnotes.

Further, extensive use has been made of the *Bibliografiya Indii* [Bibliography of India; M., 1976—here-

after referred to as B I]. We have also, of course, used many other valuable books and articles—for example, the Preface in the *Papers of Th. Stcherbatsky* [*F.I. Shcherbatskoi*] (Calcutta, 1969), by the distinguished Indian scholar and philosopher, Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (recipient of D. Litt *hon. causa* from the USSR Academy of Sciences) ; D. P. Makovitsky's *Yasnopolyanskie Zapiski* [Notes from Yasnaya Polyana ; 4 vols., M., 1979], etc .

- (3) Tver', now the city of Kalinin, a provincial centre of Soviet Union, north of Moscow. It is one of the most ancient cities of Russia.
- (4) *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (English ed. : NY, Macmillan, 1978), vol. xvii, p. 579. We can cite here the interesting statement made by I. P. Minaev on Afanasii Nikitin. Minaev wrote, "This precise and precious remark of Afanasii Nikitin that in India village people are very poor, but the nobles are rich and sumptuous, shows his outstanding power of observation. He defined the real state of affairs in old India : behind the splendour he was able to discern the grievous sides of Indian life." (II, p. 29). *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* hereafter *G.S.E.*
- (5) M. V. Lomonosov took great interest in India and in the study of her culture ; and, along with Academician, G. Kehr, planned the organisation of the systematic study of the Orient (see II, p. 62).
- (6) *Geografiya ili kratkoe zemnogo kruga opisanie* [Geography, or a Brief Account of the Earth Globe], M., 1710, St. Pbg., 1715, 1716. Contains information on India.
- (7) Bayer T. S. : *Elementa litteratura brahmanicae, tangutanne, mundagalicae, cum 10 tabulis aeri incisis ; Elementa brahmanica, tangutana, mungalica, cum 9 tabulis aeri incisis*.—"Commentarii academiae scientiarum imperialis petropolitanae", St. Pbg., t. 3, 1728, pp. 389-422 ; and t. 4, 1729, pp. 289-301.
- (8) *Historia regni graecorum Bactriani, in qua simul graecorum in India coloniarum vetus memoria explicatur accedit Christophori Theocosii Waltheri, missionarii regil Danici, Doctrinum temporum India cum paralipomenis let Leonardi Euleri, De Inderum anno solari astronomical*, St. Pbg., 1738, xxx, 213 p. (see B I, p. 143).

Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin have rightly observed that "these [Bayer's works] were among the first fundamental works in Oriental studies in European scholarship." (II, p. 38).

- (9) *Sravnitel'nyi slovar' vsekh yazykov i narechii* [Comparative Dictionary of all Languages and Dialects], pts. 1-2, St. Pbg., 1790-1.
- (10) II, p. 38.
- (11) Efremov F. S. : *Rossiiskogo unterofitsera, nyne kollezhskogo asessora devyatiletnee stranstvovanie i priklycheniya v Bukharii, Khive, Persii i Indii, i vozvrashchenie ottuda cherez Angliyu v Rossiyu, pisannoe im samim (1771-1782)* [A Russian Non-Commissioned Officer, now College Assessor's, (Account of) Nine-Year Wanderings and Adventures in Bukhara, Khiva, Persia and India, and Return Therefrom via England to Russia, Written by His Ownself (1771-1782)], 1st ed., St. Pbg., 1786, 224 p. : 2nd ed., St. Pbg., 1794 ; 3rd ed., Kazan, 1811 (see B I. pp. 83, 85, 87) ; and, in our days, say, 5th ed. (M., 1952).
- (12) *Baguat-Geta, ili besedy Krishny s Arjunom s premechaniyami, perevedennye s podlinnika, pisannogo v drevnem braminskoy yazyke, nazyvaemon Sanskrita, na angliiskii, a s sego na rossiiskii yazyk A.A. Petrovym* [Bhagavadgita ; or Conversations of Krishna with Arjuna, with notes translated from the original, written in the ancient Brahmin language, called Sanskrit, into English, and from it into Russian language by A. A. Petrov], M., 1788, 213 p.
- (13) *Stseny iz Sakuntaly, indiiskoi dramy* [Scenes from Sakuntala, Indian Drama], translation, foreword and notes by N. M. Karamzin—"Moskovskii Zhurnal" (Moskovskogo Universiteta), 1792, ch. [pt.] 6, kn. (bk.) 2. pp. 125-56, kn. [bk.] 3, pp. 294-323. Reprinted in 1802.
- (14) *Ibid.*, 1792, pt. 6, bk. 2, p. 127. Tr. by Harish C. Gupta.
- (15) *Bespristrastnoe sozertsanie sistem vostochoi Indii bramgenov, svyashchennykh obryadov ikh i narodnykh obichayev vseavguteishemu monarkhu posvyshchennoe* [An Impassioned Contemplation of the Systems of the Brahmens [Brahmans] of East India, their Sacred Rites and Popular Customs, Dedicated to His Majesty the Monarch], St. Pbg., Tipografiya G. Lebedeva [printing house] 1805, p. ii

- (16) For a more detailed account, see V. S. Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky : *Russian Indologist G. S. Lebedev...* (in Russian) in *Ocherki po istorii russkogo vostokovedeniya*, Sb. 2, M., 1956, pp. 36-7.
- (17) II, p. 41
- (18) Such an opinion was first expressed by the Soviet historian and archivist L. S. Gamayunov. "G. S. Lebedev probably writes... about Tagore's ancestors", writes L. S. Gamayunov in his article "Rabindranath Tagore in Russian and Modern Press" (in Russian), in *Problemy istorii Indii i stran srednego vostoka* (M., 1972, pp. 253-97). He refers to Lebedev's book *The Grammar of Pure and Mixed East Indian Dialects* (London, 1801), and adds that Lebedev's success in mastering languages and familiarising himself with the Indian tradition is, in a considerable measure, apparently explained by his close contacts with Bengalis who shared the temperament of enlighteners like Rammohan Roy, including also Tagores (see L. S. Gamayunov, *op. cit.*, pp. 253, 290). We shall, of course, observe here that at the time of Lebedev's visit to Calcutta, Rammohan Roy was only 13 years old. Lebedev's acquaintance might have been with a grand grand-father of Rabindranath Tagore.
- (19) About his translation of Bharat Chandra Roy's poem, Lebedev mentioned in his letter to Count S. R. Vorontsov, the Russian Ambassador to London (see Prince Vorontsov Archives [in Russian], vol. xxiv, M., 1880, p. 175). The manuscript has been preserved to this day, and is available in the State History Archives in Moscow. It contains the Bengali text of the first part of the poem, written in Lebedev's hand, its transcription into Russian [Cyrillic] script and also a glossary of numerous Indian words (see Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7).
- (20) Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin write : "Lebedev translated verses by the Bengali poet Bharat Chandra Roy and set them to music." (See II, p. 41). It seems doubtful that Lebedev composed European music for Bengali poems when Bharat Chandra Roy's songs were available. He could only adapt these songs to European instruments for including them in the performance. Since the source of the information is not indicated, it is difficult

to draw specific conclusion. G. S. Lebedev's original document reads : "... for the express purpose of enlivening the scene will be introduced some select Bengali songs adapted to and accompanied by European instruments."

- (21) *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- (22) Lebedev wrote that the design of the theatre was Russian (*a la* F. Volkov [the founder of Russian theatre]) and that of the curtains Bengali.
- (23) This treachery and fraud were, among others, master-minded by one John Battle. See *Russian-Indian Relations in the XVIII Century : Collected Documents* (in Russian), M., 1965.
- (24) *A Grammar of the Pure and Mixed East Indian Dialects with Dialogues Affixed, Spoken in All the Eastern Countries, Methodically Arranged at Calcutta, According to the Brahmanian System of the Shamscrit Language*. Lnd., 1801, xxxiv, 86 p. Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky (*op. cit.*, p. 54) observes that, in his Hindustani Grammar, Lebedev tried to unite the European and Indian grammar traditions. As we shall see, over a hundred years later, F. I. Shcherbatskoi also did the same.
- (25) Czar Alexander I's decree of January 1802 reads : "The Russian traveller Lebedev, having distinguished himself in the knowledge of Eastern Indian writings, having published in London his Grammar of Indian languages, and having presented before me many other works in this field, belonging to and made ready by him for printing, I decree that he be taken in the Academy with the rank of Professor of Oriental Languages."

The Baron A. L. Nikolai wrote to the State Secretary Troshchinsky : "At the Academy of Sciences there is none who can judge the knowledge of Mr. Lebedev, and the Academy cannot honour him with the rank of Professor of Oriental languages. Besides, although the Academy did earlier have a Professor of Oriental Languages, as per the present regulations there is no provision for it." (see *Russian-Indian Relations in the XVIII Century...*, pp. 505-7).

Czar Alexander I's decree of 2 February 1802 reads : "In recognition of the knowledge gained by him in Eastern Indian writings, I decree that the Russian tra-

- veller Mr. Lebedev be assigned to the Collegium of Foreign Affairs at the Asiatic department". (*Ibid.*, p. 507).
- (26) See note 15 *supra*. In other European countries such printing workshops appeared later—in London, only in 1808, for instance.
- (27) II, p. 42.
- (28) The list of his works intended for publication, as presented before Alexander I in 1801 and later before the State Secretary in 1816 *inter-alia* mentions *Slovar' na bengal'skom i obshchenarodnom indiiskom* [Dictionary in Bengali and Indian (Language) Common Amongst People]; *Grammatika chistogo bengal'skogo yazyka* [Grammar of the Pure Bengali Language]; *Neskol'ko razgovorov na bengal'skom narodnom indiiskom i angliiskom* [Some Conversational Phrases in Bengali, Indian (language) Common Amongst People, and English]. The manuscripts of the grammar and conversational 'phrase book' are apparently lost; only some portions of the dictionary are preserved, along with transcription [in Cyrillic]. See Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (29) Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 74. The marble slab with the epitaph is now kept in the museum.
- (30) This was emphasized far back in 1956 by L. S. Gamayunov: "Lebedev is the pioneer in study of modern Indian languages . . . he charted out the correct line along which the Russian Indology was to develop. Till the Revolution, Sanskrit studies dominated the scene; Lebedev's tradition of study of India [modern—author] was revived after the October Revolution." See L. S. Gamayunov: *From the History of the Study of India in Russia (. . . the Works of G. S. Lebedev)*, in *Ocherki po istorii russkogo vostokovedeniya*, Sb. 2. M., 1956, p. 117.
- (31) The question of the need of studying modern Indian languages, primarily Bengali and Hindustani, had been taken up by Petrov, Minaev and other distinguished Indologists.
- (32) About M. I. Tubyansky (1893-1943), the first translator and researcher of works of Tagore, see the separate section *infra*.

- (33) Lebedev wrote specifically about the need "of continuing the attempts undertaken during the reign of Peter the Great and Catherine II, and of establishing close relations with India" (see his *Impassioned Contemplation* . . . , p. 1).
- (34) Apart from the already quoted works of Vorob'ev-Desyatovsky and Gamayunov, valuable documents are available in the anthology *Russian-Indian Relations in the XVIII Century* (in Russian ; M., 1965) and in K. A. Antonova's article, "On the History of Russian-Indian Relations : From the Notebooks of G. S. Lebedev (1795-1797)" in "Istoricheskii arkhiv" (1956, No. 1, pp. 156-95). New facts are contained in P. V. Ovchinnikov's article, "From the History of Russian Indology (New Data on Biography of G. S. Lebedev)", in "Vestnik istorii mirovoi kultury" (in Russian ; M., 1960, No. 4, pp. 74-83), and in M. Medvedev's article, "Seven Faces of Gerasim Lebedev (From Archive Material)" in "Vokrug Sveta" ["Around the World", Moscow, 1963, No. 2, pp. 49-54]. In the recent past, doctoral dissertations also have been prepared on Lebedev in India and USSR—for example, by Hayat Mamud (Bangladesh), and by Prabir (India) in USSR. Unfortunately, a film on Lebedev planned jointly by the Indian artist, Utpal Datta and the Soviet side, could not be made.
- (35) II, p. 62.
- (36) This plan continued the plans of the 18th century scholars C. J. Kehr and M. V. Lomonosov for the systematic Oriental studies in Russia (II, p. 62).
- (37) See E. Ya. Lyusternik : *Russian-Indian Economic, Scientific and Cultural Relations in the 19th Century* [in Russian], M., 1966, pp. 110-1. S. S. Uvarov was at this time the Secretary in the Russian Embassy at Paris ; and his project was first published in French (*Projet d'une academie asiatique*, St. Pbg., 1810 ; the Russian and German versions were published in 1811).
- (38) At the time he was the Curator of the St. Petersburg educational district, and President of the Academy of Sciences.
- (39) II, p. 62. The excerpts quoted from Uvarov's speech have been taken from this book. The full text of the speech was published in St. Petersburg in 1818 (see BI, p. 82).

- (40) According to then prevalent tradition, many works of Russian scholars were published not in Russian but in German, French and Latin. Besides, as noted by G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin, "as early as the beginning of the 18th century, it was the accepted practice to invite many well-known scientists from Western Europe, mainly Germany, to come and work in Russia. A number of scholars of German origin invited to Russia spent their whole life there and did a great deal for their second motherland" (II, pp. 63-4). For a survey of Sanskrit studies in Russia, see II, pp. 60-81.
- (41) F. Adelung was Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, head of the Educational Section for Oriental Languages in the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (where G. Lebedev worked in 1802-1817). His book *Versuch einer Literatur der Sanscrit Sprache* (St. Pbg., 1830) was reprinted in 1837 under the title *Literature der Sanscrit Sprache. Zweite durchans verbesserte and vermehte ausgabe* (BI, p. 376). This book is a "carefully compiled systematic catalogue of printed works in Sanskrit, and was the first bibliographical description of Sanskrit literature. An English version of this catalogue was published in Oxford in 1832. (See II, p. 63).
- (42) *De affinitate linguae slavicae et Sanscritae*. Kharkov, 1833 (see BI, p. 542).
B. Dorn was invited on the recommendation of Academician Ch. Fraehn (1782-1851), the first Director of the Asiatic Museum. Dorn delivered his lectures in Latin.
- (43) II, p. 65. We may mention that the question of affinity between Russian and Sanskrit attracted the special attention of Russian scholars in late 40's and early 50's of the 19th century. See *infra*.
- (44) R. Lents [Lenz] was sent abroad at the instance of Ch. Fraehn, the Director of the Asiatic Museum, supported by S. S. Uvarov, the President of the Academy of Sciences.
- (45) *Urvasia, fabula Calidasi. Textum Sanscritum, ed. interpretationem latinam et notos; illustrantes adiecit Pobertus Lenz*, Berolini, 1833. "The text was prepared in the best traditions of classical studies and supplied with a Latin

translation and commentaries. Lenz's translation had a major influence on subsequent translations of Indian drama." (II, p. 65).

- (46) "Account of the *Sabdakalpadrum*; a Sanskrit encyclopaedical lexicon published in Calcutta by Radhakanta Dev"—JRAS, Lnd., 1835, vol. 2, pp. 188-200.
- (47) BI, p. 545.
- (48) For more details on Petrov, see II, pp. 67-71.
- (49) The first translation was that of an extract from *Nalopakhayana*—*Pesn' Naly iz 'Mahabharaty'* [The Poem of Nala from the *Mahabharata*], in "Teleskop" (The Telescope), M., 1835, pt. 26, pp. 15-6. Then he published in Russian journals in 1841 episodes from the *Mahabharata*, on Savitri and on the Abduction of Draupadi.
- (50) II, p. 68.
- (51) See A. S. Pushkin : *Perepiska 1828-31* [Correspondence 1828-31], in his *Complete Works* [in Russian], vol. xiv, M., 1941, p. 226. E. Ya. Lyusternik (*op. cit.*, p. 126) had drawn attention to Pushkin's interest in India.
- (52) Young Tolstoy had joined the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the Kazan University in 1847. V. I. Lenin also studied here in 1887.
- (53) Including an edition of the *Mahabharata* (II, p. 69). In this University "language teaching had a practical character which was ... characteristic of Kazan Oriental studies. In addition to Sanskrit it was proposed to acquaint the students with ... Bengali, Hindustani and other living languages of India." (*ibid.*). So just like the outstanding Russian Indologist I. Minaev later he did not contrast the ancient and modern languages (see II).
- (54) P. Petrov : *O glavnykh narechiyakh severnoi Indii* [On Main Dialects of Northern India],—"Moscow University News" [in Russian], 1867, no. 12, pp. 1200-18; 1868, no. 6, pp. 481-500; 1896, no. 5, pp. 332-44; 1870, no. 5, pp. 303-19.
Petrov also published papers on Indian music and medicine.
- (55) An excerpt from the *Mahabharata* relating to Sunda and Upasunda; The Story of Vidyadhara by Jimutavahana;

an excerpt from the *Bhagavata-purana* on The Legend of Dhruva, and others.

- (56) K.L. Kossovich : *Vstupitel'naya lektsiya o Sanskritskom yazyke i literature* [An Introductory Lecture on Sanskrit Language and Literature],—ZhMNP [Journal of the Ministry of Public Education], St. Pbg., 1859, vol. 103, no. 109, section 2, pp. 233-50. Quot. in II, p. 72.
- (57) *Sanskritsko-russkii slovar' (Tetradi 1-9)*. Izdanie 2-go otdeleniya Imp. AN [Sanskrit-Russian Dictionary (fasc. 1-9)] ; a publication of the 2nd Department of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. St. Pbg., 1854, xiv, 656 columns. Also fasc. 1-2 : St Pbg., 1855, 320 columns. (See BI, p. 546). Unfortunately, the Dictionary remained unfinished.
- (58) He also published Panini's ancient Indian grammar (1839-40). Panini's method of detailing a linguistic system influenced Boehtlingk's work.
- (59) II, p. 77. "Contemporary Indian scholars make active use of St. Petersburg Dictionaries in their lexicographical work. They have prepared an English translation of the Dictionary, which is being put out in Delhi (the Dictionaries are written in German)". (*Ibid.*, p. 78).
- (60) *Ibid.*
- (61) He sent to St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences a gift copy of his 7-volume Dictionary (1856). See Lyusternik, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- (62) Far back in 1812, in St. Petersburg, was published I. Levanda's work *Reflections ... on Affinity between Sanskrit and Russian Languages ... on True Origin and Source of the Slavic People and Their Name* [in French], translated the same year into Russian (BI, p. 541).
- (63) The outstanding Russian writer and critic, N. G. Chernyshevsky, published several reviews of this book of A. Hilferding. See Chernyshevsky : *Complete Works*. Vol. II. M., 1949, pp. 412-9 (first published in "Otechestvennye zapiski", St. Pbg., 1854, vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 16-23).
- (64) II, pp. 73-4. It should be also noted that A.S. Khomya-

kov (1804-1860) was an outstanding Russian philosopher. He advocated the abolition of serfdom in Russia. He attacked Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, the ideas of Westernizers and classical German idealism. His main concept was *sobornost'* which implies wholeness and inner completeness. "The many are brought together into free and organic unity by the power of love". Opposite to this was to him "association"—formal external unity of multiple elements.

His works influenced some later Russian philosophers as V. S. Solov'ev, E. N. Trubetskoi, P. A. Florinsky. (*GSE*, vol. 5, p. 527).

- (65) Quot. from II, p. 13. See O.N. Trubachev : *Indo-Arica in the Northern Black Sea Area*,—"Voprosy yazykozna-niya" [Problems of Linguistics], M., 1981, No. 2.
- (66) II, p. 13.
- (67) The article "Verovaniya indusov" [The Beliefs of the Indians],—"Otechestvennye zapiski", St. Pbg., vol. xiii, 1845, pp. 50-68.
Quot. from E. Lyusternik, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
- (68) *Dwarkanath Tagore i nyneshnee sostoyanie indiiskoi obrazovannosti* [Dwarkanath Tagore and Present Position of Indian Education].—"Biblioteka dlya chteniya" [Library for Reading], 1847, vol. 84, pp. 176-82. Reprinted in *Glazami družei : Russkie ob Indii* [With the Eyes of Friends : Russians on India], M., 1957, pp. 127-33.
- (69) *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- (70) *Ibid.*
- (71) *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- (72) *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.
- (73) *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- (74) *Ibid.*, pp. 130-1.
- (75) *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- (76) See II, p. 81.
- (77) II, p. 82.
- (78) II, pp. 83-4.

- (79) I.P. Minaev : *Buddizm : Issledovaniya i materialy* [Buddhism : Researches and Materials], pts. 1-2—Zap. istoriko-filolog, fakulteta [Transactions of the History-Philology Faculty of the St. Petersburg University], vol. xvi, pt. 1, pp. 1-280, pt. 2, pp. 1-159.
- (80) — : *Ocherk vazhneishikh pamyatnikov sanskritskoi literatury* [An Outline of Most Important Relics of Sanskrit Literature]—in : *Vseobshchaya istoriya literatury* [General History of Literature], ed. by V. Korsh. St. Pbg., 1880, vol. i, pp. 114-56.
- (81) — : *Ocherk fonetiki i morfologii yazyka Pali* [Sketch of the Morphology and Phonetics of the Pali Language] St. Pbg., 1872. Same in French : Paris, 1874.
- (82) — : *Ocherki Tseilona i Indii* [Studies of Ceylon and India.] Pt. ii, St. Pbg., 1878, pp. 180 ff.
- (83) — : *Ob izuchenii Indii v russkikh universitetakh* [On the Study of India in Russian Universities]—in “Report on the Position of Imperial St. Petersburg University and Work of its Scholars”, St. Pbg., 1884, pp. 83-102.
- (84) II, p. 105.
- (85) II, p. 90.
- (86) Minaev writes in his ‘Diary’ (pp. 191-2) : “Yesterday (1888), Haraprasad Sastri frankly declared that he was very glad to see a Russian with his own eyes. He however remembers me and my visits to the Sanskrit College ten years ago”.
- (87) II, p. 91.
- (88) Minaev’s Travel Diary, pp. 191-2.
- (89) II, p. 86.
- (90) II, p. 91. Minaev was particularly acquainted with Kashinath, T. Telang and V.I. Banerji. (Minaev’s Travel Diary, p. 110).
- (91) The meeting took place at Tula on 26 October, 1883. Minaev’s niece A.P. Shneider recollects : “On the day of the meeting, Lev Nikolaevich [Leo Tolstoy] came on foot from Yasnaya Polyana and the rest of the time, about 5-6 hours, he spent in the suite of the hotel, where Ivan Pavlovich Minaev was staying. The discus-

sion held was on Buddhism and on religious topics. Tolstoy put Ivan Pavlovich a number of very vital questions on Buddhism which needed a lot of time for exhaustive answer. On the way home (to St. Petersburg) Ivan Pavlovich went to Lev Nikolaevich in Moscow too". See O. Aleksandrova : *I.P. Minaev and L.N. Tolstoi*, "Russkaya literatura" [Russian Literature], M. 1960, No. 3, pp. 201-03. (Quot. in 'A.I. Shifman : *Lev Tolstoi i Vostok*, 2nd ed., M., 1971, p. 118). Later, in 1888, Tolstoy with great interest read Minaev's book, *Buddhism, Researches and Materials* [in Russian] sent to him by the author, and made a lot of notes thereon.

CHAPTER
TWO

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

(Late 19th and Early 20th Century)

Tolstoy. Vivekananda

*I love Indian philosophy...
The most eminent of modern Indian
thinkers is Vivekananda.*

LEO TOLSTOY (1909)

The nineties of the 19th century and the early twenties of the 20th span a very vital period of heightened interest in India—a period of fresh, great achievements of Russian Indology and of the great involvement in India of the Russian intelligentsia, including creative writers, artists, critics, and of the wide strata of Russian society. The interest this time was not merely in the ancient heritage of India ; it took in its wake modern India, with her great thinkers Ramakrishna (1838-1886) and Vivekananda (1863-1902), and upsurge of a new spirit seeking freedom from alien yoke.

The work of Minaev's pupils, specially that of the world famous F.I. Shcherbatskoi and S.F. Ol'denburg, and, thereafter, of their pupils, raised the Russian Indology to the level of the loftiest achievements of world scholarship. A detailed account of these achievements does not fall within the scope of this book ; and we shall here restrict ourselves to a very brief survey of the work of the most eminent representatives of Russian Indological studies, F.I. Shcherbatskoi, S.F. Ol'denburg and the gifted Sanskrit scholar from Kharkov, P.G. Ritter (1872-1939) who knew Bengali too. These are also scholars who later published articles on the work of Tagore or kept up friendly correspondence with him.¹ For an assessment of their work we shall again refer to the aforementioned work of Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. V. Vigasin. We shall also specially refer to Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's Introduction in *Papers of Th. Stcherbatsky* [F. I. Shcherbatskoi].²

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In 1889, Shcherbatskoi completed his course at St. Petersburg University and went abroad to study ancient Indian literature, especially Indian poetics, under G. Buehler (Vienna) and H. Jacobi (Bonn). On being appointed Assistant Professor in 1900 and Professor in 1909 at the University of St. Petersburg (later, Leningrad State University) he continued to teach right up to 1941. In 1902, he published a long article *Theory*

of *Poetry in India*³ which, for the first time in European Indology, described "in detail the teaching on *dhvani* or poetic suggestion....".⁴ "Shcherbatskoi justly emphasized high level of poetics in India... He examined the development of ancient Indian poetics and culture in general, not merely within the framework of India herself but considerably wider, against the background of the development of world civilisation".⁵

In the years before the Revolution was also published one of Shcherbatskoi's major works *Theory of Knowledge and Logic According to Later Buddhists* (vol. I : 1903, vol. II : 1909).⁶ Its importance is very great, especially if one considers that it was written when the study of Indian logic was only just beginning.

Shcherbatskoi wrote : "To discover the full extent of Dharmakirti's importance in the history of Indian philosophy ... means to write the history of Indian philosophy."⁷ "Mainly thanks to Shcherbatskoi's work, Indologists and specialists in Buddhist studies, as well as wide circles of the scholarly world in general became for the first time so fully and deeply acquainted with the achievements of ancient Indian logicians, with the creativeness of the outstanding thinkers of India—Dignaga and Dharmakirti".⁸ In 1905, Shcherbatskoi went to Mongolia, visited monastery libraries, studied rare manuscripts, and acquired proficiency in spoken Tibetan.⁹ His journey to India in 1910 was even of still greater importance.¹⁰ Although he spent less than a year there, he collected exceptionally valuable material for his work on the history of Buddhist philosophy and logic. He studied work on *Nyaya-Vaisesika* and *Mimamsa*, visited the most famous centres of traditional learning—Bombay, Benaras, Poona, and Calcutta.¹¹ His excellent knowledge of Sanskrit enabled him to discuss the most complicated problems of philosophical doctrines of various schools¹² with the pundits.¹³ He established close contacts with leading Indian Sanskrit scholars, scholarly institutions and with philosophers and relations in Buddhist studies. and afterwards maintained good relations with them for many years, carrying on regular scholarly correspondence.¹⁴

Shcherbatskoi covered a very broad range of the Indian cultural heritage. Besides the Indian poetics, he also wrote valuable papers on *The Categorical Imperative in the Brahmanas*¹⁵ and on *Scientific Achievements of Ancient India*.¹⁶

He was one of the first among modern scholars to discuss the *History of Materialism in India*.¹⁷

Though beyond the scope of the limits delineated for the present chapter, it may be mentioned here in passing that a new stage in Shcherbatskoi's creative work began in the Soviet period. In 1918, he was elected a member of the Academy of Sciences. In 1928 he was appointed Director of the Institute of Buddhist Culture, and later he headed the Indo-Tibetan Department at the Institute of Oriental Studies.

In 1923, Shcherbatskoi published a book *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word 'Dharma'*¹⁸ "The 'concept of *dharma*,' he wrote, 'is the central point of Buddhist doctrine.' He came to the conclusion that under *dharma*s should be understood elements of reality (ultimate elements) which for Buddhists were the only reality. Shcherbatskoi's basic conclusions remain important and weighty to this day,"¹⁹ write Dr. G. Bongard-Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin.

In 1927, Shcherbatskoi published his book *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*.²⁰ Here, he discerned the essential changes in the formation of this conception at various periods in the history of Buddhism. "Explaining the essence of Nagarjuna's principle of relativity, he showed that the 'Hinayanic Absolute becomes just as relative as all other ultimates of this system'."²¹

His two-volume work *Buddhist Logic* (1930-32)²² was a result of many years of research in the field of Buddhist philosophy and logic. The basic conclusion comes down to showing that notwithstanding all existing parallels, Buddhist logic "is a logic but it is not Aristotelian. It is epistemological, but not Kantian."²³

Shcherbatskoi translated valuable writings of Buddhist philosophers, Nagarjuna and Dharmakirti²⁴ and besides, Dandin's romance *Dasakumaracarita* [Adventures of Ten Princes]²⁵ He headed the team of translators engaged in the work of translation of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, and edited with a German translation the poetical work of Hari Kavi *alias* Bhanudatta.²⁶ Shcherbatskoi's translations from Sanskrit remain the best made into Russian.

Shcherbatskoi was not only a first rate research scholar but a brilliant teacher too. Such well-known specialists in Oriental studies as Y. Obermiller (1901-1935),²⁷ M. Tubyansky, A. Vostrikov (1904-1942) were all his pupils.²⁸

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His work constituted a whole epoch in world Buddhist studies. His epitaph, translated into English, reads : "He explained to his country the wisdom of the ancient Indian thinkers."²⁹

S. F. Ol'denburg, after graduating from St. Petersburg University, studied from 1887 to 1889 in Paris, London and Cambridge. He wrote extensively on the cultural and religious history of ancient and mediaeval India, on the history of Buddhist art and literature and on the history of Oriental Studies. He was one of the first scholars in Europe to stress the importance of a deep study of Gandhara art. In 1900, he was elected a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. From 1904 to 1929 he was a permanent Secretary of the Academy, and from 1930 to 1934 the Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies.

Ol'denburg and Shcherbatskoi were associated with the international project of *Bibliotheca Buddhica*.³⁰ We should moreover mention here that Ol'denburg was the first to familiarise the Russian reader with Ramakrishna Paramahansa.³¹

P. Ritter was a product of the Kharkov University. Early in his career he worked on an analysis of the hymns of the *Rigveda* devoted to the god Visnu,³² but, later, continued his studies in Germany under Karl Geldner, where, besides Sanskrit and Pali, he also studied Bengali.³³

While abroad, Ritter wrote an article (1898) on Dandin, and also made a translation of a part of his *Dasakumaracarita*.³⁴ He paid particular attention to Dandin's "frank realism".

On returning home, he conducted Sanskrit courses in Kharkov University and published a *Short Course of Sanskrit Grammar* (1904), reprinted in 1916.³⁵

Ritter was a pioneer in initiating translation work from Sanskrit and Bengali into Ukrainian. He was the first to translate from original Bengali into Ukrainian, in 1926-28,³⁶ a number of poems of Rabindranath Tagore—but more of this later.

The work of these outstanding scholars, as of other Russian Indologists of this time, is also vitally important because, as rightly noted by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, while writing about Shcherbatskoi,³⁷ such an "all-absorbing interest in the Indian cultural heritage . . . was *not* for any romantic fascination for the half unknown mystic East in which some of his [Shcherbatskoi's] European contemporaries were seeking an escape from the sickness and degradation of their own capitalist society." (We shall talk of this tendency in greater detail later). "Certainly again", Professor Chattopadhyaya continues, "it had nothing to do with the peculiarly perverted moral sanction for colonial exploitation which another section of his European contemporaries was trying to derive by depicting Indian culture as being inherently stunted in matters of science and rationalism. . . . On the contrary, [they] showed definite distaste for any romantic fascination for the mystic East and he [Shcherbatskoi] was the first among the European scholars to have insisted on the importance of recognising India's contribution to science and rationalism."³⁸

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Around this time, the eminent symbolist poet K. D. Bal'mont (1867-1942) published a poetic translation (1913) of Asvaghosha's *Buddhacarita* [Life of Buddha] in the series *Monuments of World Literature* (in Russian), with a foreword by the eminent French Indologist Sylvain Levi, and also a fresh translation (1915) of Kalidasa's drama *Sakuntala*. He also translated *Malavikagnimitra* and *Vikramorvasi*, published from Moscow in 1916, with an introductory article by S. F. Ol'denburg.³⁹

Translations of works of ancient Indian literature were also made by D. S. Merezhkovsky (1866-1941). Valerii Bryusov (1873-1924), the most important symbolist poet after Alexander Blok, was also greatly inspired by Indian culture ; we shall be citing his poem *Imitation of Rabindranath* in a subsequent chapter. Many other poets,—the celebrated lyric poet Sergei Esenin amongst them,—found in Indian culture much that was in harmony with their own inspired thoughts.

* * *

India as a theme also permeates other spheres of art, and becomes a dominant trend in the work of the outstanding

Russian artist and thinker, Nikolai Roerich (1874-1947), who later lived for a long time in India, and that of the talented members of his family.⁴⁰ Later, we shall be dwelling in detail on Nikolai Roerich, on his first acquaintance with Tagore and on his subsequent friendship and correspondence with the great Indian writer. Here, we shall quote a few words from his "Pages from My Diary" which are relevant here :

"An association with India could be noticed from the very childhood. The name of our estate "Izvara",⁴¹ as Tagore later admitted, was a Sanskrit word. During the time of Catherine II, some sort of an Indian raja lived in our neighbourhood and the traces of a Mughal park stayed till the last. We had with us an old painting representing some sort of a mountain, and always holding a special attraction for us. It was only later that I learnt from a book by Brian Hodgson [1800-1894] that this was the famous Kanchenjunga.

From as early as in 1905, many paintings and essays were devoted to India—"Devassari", "Lakshmi", . . . "The Indian Way", "Krishna", "India's Son." All this had been done much before the visit to India . . . Elena Ivanovna [Roerich's wife] had been long familiar with the works of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and had liked them.⁴²

Before Roerich, the distinguished Russian artist V. V. Vereshchagin (1842-1904) visited India twice (1874-76 and 1882-83) and made 150 sketches which became the base for his numerous paintings.⁴³ V. V. Vereshchagin was very unhappy about foreign subjugation of India and, in his paintings, strove to give expression to his feelings. To his friend, V. V. Stasov, the eminent Russian critic, who also had a keen interest in India, Vereshchagin wrote : "The underlying idea of my paintings is how India has been grabbed and plundered by the British. Some of these themes are such as will tear asunder even the harsh British skin."⁴⁴ On the death of the artist, the newspaper "Times of India" wrote in an article, "The Noble Russian" : "After Leo Tolstoy the name of Vereshchagin is the most well known in India."⁴⁵

The great theatre director and actor Konstantin Stanislavsky

also displayed a great fondness for India and later even worked for putting something of Tagore's plays on the stage.

* * *

We stated earlier that, towards the close of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, one notices, both in the West and in Russia, altogether a new dimension in the interest in Indian philosophy, religion and literature—and this time not only in the ancient but modern too. The reasons for this being many and varied, and a detailed analysis thereof being not within the scope of the theme of this book, we shall here only point out that this interest had, among other things, been aroused first by the quest for an escape from the spiritual crisis which was seeking to engulf the bourgeois society of those years. Secondly, a considerable part of the intelligentsia was getting disappointed with a number of values,—for example, that science was the only possible means of cognition of reality ; or Christianity, specially in its orthodox forms, was the only acceptable religion. This was giving way to an urge for creating some sort of a new religious doctrine.

These quests, in one of their rather extreme forms, found reflection, in particular, in the establishment of a Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York by the Russian traveller and writer, Madame Blavatskaya (1831-1891)⁴⁶ and American lawyer and newspaperman 'Colonel' Olcott (1832-1907).

In 1879 the Society headquarters was transferred to India, and since 1882 has been located at Adyar, near Madras. After Olcott's death, the presidentship of the Society passed over to Annie Besant (1847-1933), who was no ordinary person.⁴⁷

An appraisal of the activity or of the doctrines of this Society not being within our purview, we shall only note that this Society in fact took the place of spiritism which was then gaining a bad reputation (though societies of "spirits" and theosophists exist in the West to this day).

To achieve their objectives, the leaders of this Society sought, among other things, to exploit the great interest that the wide public in Russia (or, for that matter, all the world over) had in India ; and thus strove to clothe their treatises in the garb of ancient Indian philosophical terminology and pass them out as some sort of "Indian wisdom". This did, in some measure, help to further increase the attraction for Indian culture and

focus greater attention on it, but this also, in far greater measure, resulted in spreading a distorted and sometimes simply untrue picture thereof. Even to this day one comes across cases where the writings of the theosophists, or of those apparently different but close to them in spirit are, purely because of some sort of external semblance, identified with the real works of creative genius of Indian philosophy. This type of error also crept in and has continued to creep in even in the understanding and evaluation of the works of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. We shall be discussing this at greater length when we come to the appraisal of Tagore's works.

We must observe here that the great thinker and social leader of India, Swami Vivekananda (in 1893-1901), and later the great writer, Rabindranath Tagore (in 1912-1930), during their travels abroad, rendered yeoman's service in removing these distorted ideas of Indian philosophy and culture, and familiarising the world at large with the veritably true culture of the Indian peoples. They trained the people gradually and skilfully to evolve some means of discerning the true from the false, viz. the imitations *a la* India of the European material from the real gold of Indian philosophy. Their brilliant lectures, reaching out to a wide, diverse audience, gave first hand information on the lofty attainments of Indian thought and removed the veil of mist that had been precipitating because of the aforesaid distortions. These lectures went a long way to appease, in a definite measure, the "spiritual hunger" of the listeners, who had been thirsting for the wisdom of the distant land of wondrous India. The works of Vivekananda and Tagore have ever remained extremely popular and constantly out of print.

Thus, it appears, one can easily identify two clear trends amongst those attracted towards the rich heritage of culture of India,—one, where the knowledge of India was gained from the real Indian values by appraising them in the context of the distinctiveness of their own national culture; and the other, which rested more on the mystic and sometimes fantastic treatises of the theosophists or of representatives of currents similar to them in spirit. The simple, sincere folk, with romantic ideas, felt enamoured of the doctrines expounded in these treatises.

Many rational thinkers of sound judgement who cared for the real Indian values sharply criticised and continue to criticise

the theosophist and like-minded leaders for their faith in all possible miracles, in the same way as they rejected all miracles in the religious practices of orthodox and other forms of Christianity. And those who were far away from India sometimes took all these miracles as being the characteristic trait of Indian philosophical thought, and summarily rejected such a teaching. The situation became all the more complex because, for their own aims, the theosophists themselves willingly translated the masterpieces of ancient Indian literature, and used the names of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda and, as we shall see later, also of Rabindranath Tagore, although, as is known, Vivekananda had sharply criticised the theosophists⁴⁸ and Tagore was completely indifferent to them. The negative assessments that the scholars and intellectuals largely made of theosophy sometimes were also erroneously applied by them to the appraisal of work of Vivekananda and Tagore.

Another trend of thought was taking shape amongst that section of the society in the West which spiritually was rather less developed. This trend (also continuing to this day) strove to study, for the sake of narrow egoistic interests, that is, only for the sake of achieving success in material life, one great achievement of ancient Indian culture going back to hoary antiquity,—the system of yogic exercises, for developing physical potential and latent psychic capacities.

The interest in yoga much grown specially after the publication in the West of the first serious modern work on the subject viz. Vivekananda's *Lectures on Raja Yoga* (1896) which inspired many intellectuals like even Leo Tolstoy and Romain Rolland, was also incidentally exploited by some persons. And this exploitation led to simplification and even corruption of the subject.

Very many books on yoga were written by the American judge of Pennsylvania, William Atkinson, who adopted the Hindu name of "Ramacharaka", making confusion worse confounded when a serious investigator of the subject mistakes him for some sort of Indian philosopher or a like-minded Western.⁴⁹ Very many books of "Ramacharaka" were published in Russia before the Revolution, at one time⁵⁰ even along with the works of Vivekananda; and this could not but have an adverse effect on the people sincerely and truly interested in Indian philo-

sophy. These works, though claiming to be scientific, were actually not at all original and were, besides, only of a popular nature. Later, the book bazaars in the West and in India have remained flooded with cheap, hackneyed literature, which makes the true perception of yoga very difficult and alienates persons with sound sense.

The great writer of the Russian land, Leo Tolstoy, had a deep and passionate interest in Indian philosophy and literature. We have some evidence that Tolstoy had an attraction for Indian, more precisely Buddhist, philosophy⁵¹ right from his youthful years. This attraction however blossomed into maturity towards the end of the 1870's in the context of his ardent passion for pedagogical work. This is seen from the fact that he incorporated, in his text-book meant for educating the masses,⁵² Indian tales which had made a great impression on him because of the inherent wisdom.

In the 80's, that is, during the years of his spiritual crisis, when he was trying to cleanse the Christian teaching of later corruptions and interpolations and was also mercilessly criticising the orthodox Christian Church (for which he was even ex-communicated from the Church, a unique fact in the biography of a Russian litterateur) he more than ever before started turning to masterpieces of ancient Indian philosophy.⁵³ In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth he continued not only to study the ancient Indian philosophical heritage but also modern Indian thought. Thus, with the help of his Indian friends with whom he was corresponding, he discovered for himself the great Indians Vivekananda and Ramakrishna.⁵⁴

* * *

It is well known that Tolstoy has been enjoying singular popularity in India where, out of love and respect, he is called *rishi*, an epithet used by the Indians for their sages right from the time of the Vedas. Mahatma Gandhi believed himself to be a dedicated admirer of Leo Tolstoy, "owing him much in life." Gandhi and Tolstoy exchanged letters,⁵⁵ and this correspondence is not only well known but already fairly well studied.

But what to this day remains virtually obscure or known only in a distorted form is the great place which Tolstoy's

contemporary. Swami Vivekananda, and his preceptor Ramakrishna Paramahansa held in Tolstoy's quests of spiritual life in the last years of his life.⁵⁶

We find that the best, though concise, that has been said on this theme is by Romain Rolland, the author of the most profound and extensive works on Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, translated into Russian.⁵⁷ These works have over the years, been a good source of inspiration not only for the scholars of the subject but also for those in the Soviet Union who have been interested in modern Indian thought.⁵⁸

Romain Rolland writes: "Tolstoy, with his vast curious spirit, of course, knew about them... In 1896 he had felt exhilarated to see Vivekananda's first published works *Yoga's Philosophy* and *Lectures on Raja Yoga*. He was also delighted at Vivekananda's book on Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna. It is the misfortune of mankind that Vivekananda, in the course of his travels in Europe in 1900, was not advised to go to Yasnaya Polyana.⁵⁹ The author of this book [Romain Rolland] is not happy at the thought that in this year of the World Fair, when the great Swami passed through Paris, surrounded by such bad guides, he was not able to bring together the two clairvoyants, the two religious geniuses of Europe and Asia."⁶⁰ In his biography of Vivekananda, Romain Rolland adds that "up to June 1895 he [Vivekananda] had completed the editing of his famous treatise on Raja Yoga, which was destined ... to inspire (italics mine—author) Tolstoy,⁶¹ but, Rolland continues in his *Life of Tolstoy*: "the fatal movement of the historical stream took Tolstoy away from the yogis with their terror of god to the threshold of the great work of Vivekananda and Gandhi—Hind Swaraj."⁶²

We, of course, have no pretensions to a full treatment of the Tolstoy-Vivekananda theme in this chapter. We have tried to follow chronologically the course of development of Tolstoy's thought and the circle of his interests within the framework of our theme—to show his profound interest in India, Indian philosophy and in the personality of one of the most outstanding intellectual leaders of modern India, Swami Vivekananda, and his exceptionally high assessment about his works.

This account is based only on Tolstoy's own statements and observations found expressed in various articles, letters, entries in diaries and also on extensive notes (only very recently

published) of his personal physician and friend, D. P. Makovitsky, who from 1905 was always with Tolstoy right up to the latter's death.⁶³

On 13 September 1896 Leo Tolstoy wrote to Anendra Kumar Datta⁶⁴: "I received your letter and the book [Vivekananda's *Yoga's Philosophy, Lectures on Rajayoga, or Conquering Internal Nature*, NY, 1896] and thank you very much for both. The book is most remarkable and I have received much instruction from it. The metaphysical side of the doctrine, the precept as to what the true 'I' of a man is, is excellent. So far humanity has frequently gone backwards from the true and lofty and clear conception of the principle of life, but never surpassed it."⁶⁵

The next day, on 14 September 1896, Leo Tolstoy writes in his diary: "During this time there has been a letter from a Hindu 'Tod' (A. K. Datta) and a charming book of Indian wisdom."⁶⁶

That this book really inspired Tolstoy is also seen from his letter to P. V. Verigin.⁶⁷

About Ramakrishna Tolstoy came to know for the first time in 1903 when he received from Germany the journal "Theosophischer Wegweiser." He underlined Ramakrishna's numerous aphorisms. "Much here is the same as my own understanding," he wrote then in his diary.⁶⁸ A lot of these sayings in a revised form found place in Tolstoy's book [*Sayings*] *For Every Day, Circle of Reading and Way of Life*.

But far greater impression on Tolstoy was made by excerpts sent to him by K. A. Sergeenko from Max Mueller's book *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa*. Tolstoy wrote to Sergeenko on 13 February 1906: "Ramakrishna I know, and I have many excerpts from him. I know Ramakrishna from theosophy journals. The fine thoughts you have recorded are not there. Where did you take them from?"⁶⁹ And, in his conversation with D. Makovitsky, Tolstoy observed: "Sergeenko has sent me extracts from Mueller's book on Ramakrishna. His selection of the 'Sayings' is wonderful. Ramakrishna died 50 years (?) ago. The most brilliant wise man!"⁷⁰ But Tolstoy at that time apparently did not know that Vivekananda was Ramakrishna's pupil.

We shall note here that during this period Tolstoy also kept up correspondence with Baba Premananda Bharati (Surendranath Mukherjee),⁷¹ a pupil of Vivekananda. Bharati had sent Tolstoy a book on Krishna which had evoked the writer's interest.⁷² Tolstoy's letter of 3/16 February 1907 to Bharati about this book is of special interest, for it enables us to have a better understanding of some subsequent statements of the writer on Vivekananda: "The metaphysical, religious idea of Krishna so well expounded in your book is the eternal and universal basis of all religions and all philosophical systems. It is the truth that the essence of everything existent . . . is love and that human soul is the emanation of this essence . . . But in Krishna's religion, as also in all ancient religions, there exist assertions which not only cannot be established but are a clear product of unrestrained imagination and are moreover not necessary at all . . . Such . . . are all stories of *miracles* . . ."⁷³ (emphasis mine—author).

Russian writer and Tolstoy's friend and follower, I. P. Nazhivin, advised Tolstoy to read not Baba Bharati's book on Krishna but another, better one⁷⁴ (Nazhivin's letter of 29 June 1907). And on 7 July 1907, in his reply, he sent a request to Nazhivin: "Please send the Brahmin's book. Reading of such a book surpasses all pleasure. This is elation of the soul."⁷⁵ But the book, it seems, did not then reach Leo Tolstoy, for there is no reference to his reading it.

Tolstoy's further familiarity with Vivekananda, more complete and profound, judging from all available records, took place in 1908. This time Tolstoy's introduction to Vivekananda took place through I. F. Nazhivin who had himself translated Vivekananda's two speeches and "Hymn of Creation."⁷⁶ These, so far as we are aware, were the very first translations into Russian of Vivekananda's works.

In 1908, Tolstoy, on receiving Nazhivin's aforesaid books, could not help exclaiming: "I have just finished reading your wonderful book *The Voice of the People* and I wish to say thanks for this"⁷⁷ (Letter of 9 March 1908 to Nazhivin). The Hindu's article has left a great impression on me.⁷⁸ This is unusually good" (Letter of 12 March 1908 to Nazhivin). The writer once again felt his nearness to Vivekananda. "Yesterday read the Hindu's wonderful article [*God and Man*], translated into Russian by Nazhivin. Here are my thoughts obscurely

expressed,"⁷⁹—writes Leo Tolstoy in his diary on 10 March 1908.

Tolstoy makes all efforts to have more of Vivekananda's works. On 25 May 1908 he told D. P. Makovitsky that he had read two volumes⁸⁰ of Swami Vivekananda received on that day. "Surprisingly profound on god, soul, man, unity of religions, He is Ramakrishna's pupil, and died in 1902."⁸¹ And it is only now that Tolstoy at last comes to know about the unusual bonds between these two thinkers so close to him.

Leo Tolstoy begins to read Vivekananda's work enthusiastically. He takes notes and underlines what specially impresses him.⁸² On 5 June 1908 Tolstoy told Makovitsky : "Since six in the morning I have been thinking of Vivekananda. Yesterday read Vivekananda whole day. There is a chapter on the justification of violent means—for resisting the evil. *Very talentedly written.*"⁸³ (emphasis mine—author).

On 21 June 1908 he talked to V. G. Chertkov about Swami Vivekananda's article on Krishna. This article essentially touched upon the problem of righteousness or unrighteousness of violence or non-violence. Tolstoy said : "Krishna sometimes commands that evil be rewarded by good and sometimes kills the evil doer and then resurrects him and makes him feel the joy of life" (Tolstoy elucidated it in the sense that this was toning down of punishment, that this leads to the same law of reward of evil by good.⁸⁴ D. P. Makovitsky wrote on 26 June 1908 : "Yesterday Tolstoy came to the hall with one of Swami Vivekananda's volumes . . . 'Excellent book, so many thoughts are here for Circle of Reading',⁸⁵—said Tolstoy."

It should however be noted here that if Tolstoy has casually and out of context made some critical comments on Vivekananda one should not take them in their literal sense. Tolstoy considered Vivekananda a part of his inner world ; and while he discussed him with others or made some comments on him, this was rather some sort of loud thinking for exchange of views and not any judgement on Vivekananda.

For instance, Tolstoy always denied the existence of so-called miracles and sharply condemned one's belief in them. Not being familiar with all principal works of Vivekananda, he sometimes found in him this belief in miracles,⁸⁶ although Vivekananda, as is well known, had censured such a belief.⁸⁷ Besides, Tolstoy never spared even the greatest authorities

(not even Shakespeare) in any walk of life when it came to making critical comments if necessary. In short, Tolstoy judged harshly both his ownself and others. He had, as we have already seen, exceptionally high assesment about Vivekananda on the whole.

This subject also was raised when Tolstoy was talking with a group of leading theosophists who came to Yasnaya Polyana,⁸⁸ Then one of them, Pisareva, "started entering into supernatural explanations," Tolstoy exclaimed : "Here is the very thing which repulses me. This is something which can be discovered in an unnatural way. This characteristic is also there in Vivekananda."⁸⁹

In his talks with the theosophists, Leo Tolstoy gave expression to some of his original, profound thoughts, which make it possible for us to understand better his concept of essential problems of Indian philosophy and religion. Tolstoy said : "We live in an illusory world, life is ever and ever more an awakening in me and in us of the divine source, a spiritual one... The material world, what does it exist for?... How one can know why the world exists ... I am engaged in how to assist each other in the best possible way, and ... this field is endless, field of liberation ... if anything frightens me, it is to be born in a palace and not in a slum. Life is the process of liberation of spiritual source, the very source which is there in the convict and in everybody. And our efforts must be directed towards this and not towards what these 'ethers' are and what will happen to our souls. And this most vital thing has been said everywhere the same ... [theosophy] is the most impure truth when one judges that none is able to know, observe soul for 1,000 years, what sort of substance this is which can observe the soul for 1,000 years—this is 'absurd.'"⁹⁰

The theosophists went away, and Tolstoy's irritation waned out in a few days. On 4 July 1908 he noted in his diary in quite another tone : "Read Vivekananda's article on God,—an excellent one. It should be translated. I myself thought of this itself. His criticism of Schopenhauer's *Will* is quite true."⁹¹

A general assessment of Vivekananda's work made by Tolstoy after he had familiarised himself with a large number of his works, is most clearly seen in his article "Religion and Science" (completed on 17 August 1908). Though, as men-

tioned earlier, some critical comments made by Tolstoy on Vivekananda were in his personal diaries or talks, and were not for the press, the article "Religion and Science" was duly meant for publication. Here he virtually says that mankind must assimilate the heritage of Vivekananda along with that of the other sages. He writes : "The task before the leading thinkers of mankind now . . . is to show the inevitability and need of what has ever been regarded as [=Knowledge]. And to show that this knowledge was long known to mankind and manifested itself both in the teachings of religion as well as in the teachings of the sages, not only Indian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman, but also the later ones until the very last : Kant, Schopenhauer, Vivekananda, etc."⁹²

During the last one year and a half of his life Tolstoy paid great attention to the problems of contemporary life in India, and the liberation of her people. As is known, the impetus for this was provided by the letter from the young Indian revolutionary, Taraknath Das.⁹³ Tolstoy took almost half a year to write his famous "Letter to a Hindu" (completed on 14 December 1908), addressed apparently to an individual but essentially a message to the entire Indian people. It is not a matter of mere coincidence that not only Vivekananda's name is mentioned twice in the text of this letter but one of the sections of the letter itself opens with an epigraph from Vivekananda—"God is one whole ; we are only its parts" (Vivekananda's exposition of the teaching of Vedas).⁹⁴ As is known, this letter later initiated the correspondence between Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi which afterwards also played an important role in the growth of the national liberation movement in India. A survey of this correspondence, or its detailed analysis, is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

On 16 February 1909 Tolstoy received the third volume of Vivekananda's "Speeches and Writings." Makovitsky records that Tolstoy read it and liked it immensely in the same way as he had the earlier two volumes.⁹⁵

In his article "On Education" completed in May 1909 he again mentions Vivekananda amongst the best thinkers of the world alongside Socrates, Rousseau, Kant etc.⁹⁶ And on 7 May 1909 he spoke to the editor of the "Posrednik" and said that "the most eminent of modern Indian thinkers is Vivekananda and he should be published."⁹⁷

Tolstoy also continued to stress the need for reading and studying Vivekananda.⁹⁸

In 1910 which unfortunately turned out to be the last year of his life Tolstoy continued to appreciate Vivekananda and take interest in Indian philosophy maybe more than before.

Thus, while talking to Bulanzhe on 28 January 1910 about the book *Theosophy and Modern Psychology* by Annie Besant, Tolstoy said : "She depends on what is weak, what is erroneous, and *Vivekananda on what is true*"⁹⁹ (emphasis mine—author) This observation of Tolstoy further corroborates what a great contrast he discerned between the theosophists and Vivekananda, and how very akin was the thinking of these two great minds in respect of evaluation of theosophy, specially in the attitude to so called "miracles."

On 12 March 1910, on receiving a book entitled *The Fountain Head of Religion*, Tolstoy exclaimed : "This book has given me great joy. I have, for the first time, understood that we have become accustomed to regard as Gods, the "god-creator", "god Christ", "god Mohammad", who soar in the skies ; and (as regards) the god who is the source of everything... only such great minds as the ancient Indian sages, can attain this great concept. Were there no Krishna, there would have been for us no concept of god. Our Christian notions of spiritual life come from the ancient Hebrew, and the Hebrew notions from the Assyrian, and the Assyrian from the Indian... the older, the loftier."¹⁰⁰

And in a letter of 8 April 1910 to F. Ovchinnikov Tolstoy again made exceptionally high assessment of Vivekananda, placing him amongst the world's best thinkers. This was Tolstoy's last public statement on Vivekananda :

You can see this [truth] from the books both of ancient as well as modern serious thinkers starting with the authors of the Indian Vedas, the Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Socrates, Plato, Christ ... unto Rousseau, Pascal, Kant, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Fichte, *Vivekananda* (emphasis mine—author) and many others..."¹⁰¹

To conclude we would like to say that for Tolstoy, Vivekananda had indeed become and remained unto the last, a living personification of the spiritual richness of modern India. He was the first in Russia who could comprehend the signi-

ficance of Vivekananda's work for India and for the whole world.¹⁰² As we have seen, Tolstoy regarded Vivekananda as one of the greatest thinkers of the world, and stressed for the posterity the need for reading and studying Vivekananda.

* * *

In other words, one may say that at that time none else did so much for bringing together the peoples of India and Russia and for conveying a true understanding of Indian culture to the Russian peoples as Leo Tolstoy.

Thus, Tolstoy's high assessment and appreciation of Indian culture, and specially of a great thinker of modern India, viz. of Vivekananda, *reflects, as in a mirror, the vast interest of the Russian intelligentsia and public in general, in India, both ancient and modern. It is in this background that we shall try to explain below the wide, immediate and continued recognition that Rabindranath Tagore received in Russia.*¹⁰³

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) F. I. Shcherbatskoi and Rabindranath Tagore started their friendly correspondence in 1923 when on Tagore's request to Shcherbatskoi, the USSR Academy of Sciences sent to Santiniketan *The Great St. Petersburg Sanskrit Dictionary*. S. F. Ol'denburg wrote some articles on Tagore. P. G. Ritter made first translations of Tagore's poems from Bengali into Ukrainian and also wrote some articles.
- (2) *Papers of Th. Stcherbatsky* [F. I. Shcherbatskoi], translated for the first time into English by Harish C. Gupta, edited with an introduction by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya—"Soviet Indology Series," no. 2, Calcutta, Indian Studies : Past and Present, 1969.
- (3) F. I. Shcherbatskoi : *Teoria poezii v Indii* [Theory of Poetry in India]—ZhMNP [Journal of the Ministry of Public Education], St. Pbg., 1902, vol. 342, no. 6, sec. 2, pp. 299-329. Reprinted in *Selected Works of Russian Indologists-Philologists* [in Russian], M., 1962, and in *Papers of Th. Stcherbatsky*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 25-52.
- (4) Dr. G. Bongard Levin and Dr. A. Vigasin write : "It is significant that this research of Shcherbatskoi's was

published before the appearance of the special work on ancient Indian poetics by one of the founders of German Indology, Hermann Jacobi." (II, p. 128).

- (5) *Ibid.*
- (6) F.I. Shcherbatskoi : *The Theory of Knowledge and Logic According to Later Buddhists*, vol. i. *The Nyaya-bindu Prakarana* (A Short Treatise of Logic) by Dharmakirti and Dharmottara's commentary, St. Pbg., 1903 ; vol. ii. *Study of Perception and Inference*, St. Pbg., 1909. German translation : Munchen, Neubiberg, 1922-1924 French tr. : Paris, 1926.
- (7) Quot. in II, p. 130.
- (8) II, p. 131.
- (9) Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya writes : "He . . . extensively toured Mongolia where, under the guidance of the learned Lamas, he . . . read the Buddhist texts preserved in the monasteries. It was a pity that the political considerations of the time led the then Dalai Lama to refuse him the permit to visit Tibet, though this could not prevent Shcherbatskoi from acquiring the mastery of Tibetan language and thus to have a free access to the enormous literature on logic and epistemology produced by the later Buddhists." (*Pap. Stch.*, p. x).
- (10) Shcherbatskoi writes in his article *Kratkii otchet o komandirovke v Indiyu* [A Short Report on the Trip to India in 1910] in "Izvestiya russkogo komiteta dlya izucheniya Srednei i Vostochnoi Azii . . . St. Pbg., 1912, ser. 22, no. 1, pp. 70-5 : "The object of my tour of India besides a general acquaintance with the country, is primarily the quest of the relics of the Buddhist philosophical literature in the writings of the Buddhists themselves and also in those of the Brahmanas and Jainas, inasmuch as these throw light on the period of the flourish of Buddhism in the history of the Buddhist civilization (5th to 10th centuries A.D.). At the same time, I intended to familiarise myself with the present position in India of the study of Sanskrit language and literature, specially on those branches of literature which till now have not been taken up by European scholars and are for them more or less a riddle". (Quot. by I.

Kal 'yanov in the Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1946, vol. v, no. 3, p. 248).

- (11) As D. Chattopadhyaya writes : "In Calcutta . . . he found a new manuscript of his most favourite subject. As he said, . . . 'at the time of my stay in Calcutta in 1910 I also discovered another manuscript of the *Nyayabindutika* . . . in the library of the Asiatic Society. Due to the kindness of the Secretary of the Society, Dr. Denison Ross, this manuscript was sent to us for my use in the Asiatic Museum, Academy of Sciences'." (*Pap. Stch.*, p. xvi).
- (12) D. Chattopadhyaya writes : "The language of these texts is often extremely cryptic while the points and counter-points raised particularly in their polemical parts are often most difficult to follow. It is only through the tradition of direct oral transmission from teacher to student prevalent in the country for centuries that the subtle significance of these texts has somehow or other survived". (*Ibid.*, p. xv).
- (13) F.I. Shcherbatskoi wrote to S.F. Ol'denburg in April 1910 : "I at once fell upon two pundits from Mithila, genuine *shastris*, one of them a *sanyasi*. With their help I am going through the same full course of *Nyaya* as the *shastris* themselves do. They are genuine Hindu teachers of the old style, and of course without a word of English . . . It will soon be four months since I began to spend 16 hours a day on *Nyaya*". (Quot. in II, p. 133).

Shcherbatskoi had a high regard for the Indian traditional scientific methods. He wrote later : "Many European [researchers] cause much damage to their own mission by ridiculing the methods of studies pursued by Indian scholars. These European researchers think that critical method was best suited for their purpose and by following this method they would be able to go far ahead of their Indian counterparts in the fields of intellectual pursuit. Even if we accept it as a better method, we cannot deny the fact that the end products of this method do not always prove to be satisfactory. The Indian method of in-depth studies is not an exercise in drudgery, it is a living dynamic tradition and rich in

spiritual values. By applying better European methods you may not achieve the desired results, while the same is possible by applying Indian methods. You have to follow the traditional methods laid down by Indian grammarians if you intend to acquire a comprehensive knowledge about Sanskrit language and literature."

- (14) D. Chattopadhyaya writes : "From the description of Shcherbatskoi's collection preserved in the Archives of the Academy of Sciences, USSR, we know of more than thirty eminent Indians whose personal letters to Shcherbatskoi are preserved in the Archives. These correspondents included R. Tagore, S.N. Dasgupta, D.R. Bhandarkar, V. Bhattacharyya, D. Kosambi, S.K. Chatterji, Rahula Sankrityayana and others ... He must also have been writing back to his Indian friends.

The last letter received by Rahula Sankrityayana from him shows how deeply Shcherbatskoi was moved by purely personal concern for his Indian friend. It was written in 1941, when Rahula was in the British jail and Shcherbatskoi would not simply believe the senselessness of indefinitely detaining such a fine scholar : 'Are you still in jail? Have you been informed how long you will be kept in detention? How is your health? ... Is it really possible that nothing has been intimated to you about the future? Did you enquire?' (R. Sankrityayana in *Jin-ka mem kritajna*, Allahabad, 1957, p. 195)." See *Pap. Stch.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

- (15) F.I. Shcherbatskoi : *Uchenie o kategoricheskom imperativu u Brakhmanov* [The Doctrine of Categorical Imperative of the Brahmanas]. *Sbornik Muzeya antropologii i etnografii pri AN* [Anthology of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences], Pg. 1918, vol. 5, 1, pp. 359-70.
- (16) — : *Nauchnie dostizheniya drevnei Indii* [Scientific Achievements of Ancient India]—in "The Report on the work of the Russian Academy of Sciences for the year 1923", prepared by S.F. Ol'denburg and read at session of 2 February 1924, L., 1924, pp. 1-25.
- (17) — : *K istorii materializma v Indii* [On History of Materialism in India]—in "Vostochnye zapiski Leningradskogo Instituta zhivyykh vostochnykh yazykov [Ori:

Pratibha

607

ental Notes of the Leningrad Institute of Modern Oriental Languages), 1927, vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

- (18) — : *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word Dharma*, Lnd., Royal Asiatic Society, 1923, 112p. (Prize Publication Fund, vol. vii,). 2nd ed. : Calcutta, 1965.
 - (19) II, p. 136.
 - (20) F.I. Shcherbatskoi : *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*. L., USSR Academy of Sciences, 1927, vi, 246p. Japanese tr. : Tokyo, 1957.
 - (21) II, p. 138.
 - (22) F.I. Shcherbatskoi : *Buddhist Logic*, vols. 1-2, L., USSR Academy of Sciences, 1930-32 (*Bibliotheca Buddhica*, xxi, xxvi).
 - (23) II, p. 139.
 - (24) Chapter i and xxx of Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika-sastra* and Chandrakirti's commentary on it in the *Prasanapada* (in the book *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*). Shcherbatskoi considered these works to be the true philosophical basis of Mahayana Buddhism (see II, p. 138).
- Dharmakirti : *Obosnovanie chuzhoi odushevlennosti s tolkovaniem Vinitadeva*. [Establishment of the Existence of Other Minds. With Vinitadeva's Commentary], Pg., 1922, xv, 79p. (*Pamyatniki indiiskoi filosofii*, no. 1). For English translation see *Papers of Th. Shcherbatsky*.
- (25) Dandin : *Priklyucheniya desyati printsev* [Adventures of Ten Princes],—"Vostok" [The Orient], M.-Pg., 1923. No. 3, pp. 50-82 ; 1924, No. 4, pp. 65-96 ; 1925, No. 5, pp. 16-46.
 - (26) D. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.* p. xii.
 - (27) Obermiller was elected an honorary member of the Greater India Society whose president was Rabindranath Tagore. See *Aziatskii muzei—Leningradskoe otdelenie. IV AN SSSR* [Asiatic Museum—Leningrad Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies of USSR Academy of Sciences], M., 1972, p. 160.
 - (28) "This system of teaching Sanskrit was strictly worked out . . . in the first year students worked from Buehler's textbook, which incidentally Shcherbatskoi had himself

published in Russian, in the second year they read the *Meghaduta* by Kalidasa with Mallinatha's commentary, in the third year, the *Sakuntala* and the philosophical text *Tarka-bhasha* and Panini's grammar, and in the fourth year Dandin's *Dasakumaracarita* and Bana's *Kadambari*." (II, p. 142).

- (29) *Pap. Stch.*, p. i.
- (30) In the words of Shcherbatskoi the accomplishment of this publication "was entirely due to his initiative and concern." It was begun as far back as 1897 and had as its aim issue of original and translated Buddhist writings connected with Northern Buddhism. Leading world specialists in Buddhist studies took part in the *Bibliotheca Buddhica* and up to the 30's of the 20th century about 100 volumes were published. (II, p. 117). See a chapter on Ol'denburg's activity in II, pp. 109-25.
- (31) S. F. Ol'denburg : *Sovremennyi indiiskii svyatoi*. [A Saint of Modern India]—ZhMNP, St. Pbg., 1900, vol. 329, no. 6, pp. 347-53.
 It must be observed here that just as in 1896 Leo Tolstoy was able to appraise the greatness of Vivekananda at once on reading his *Raja Yoga*, in the same way, S. F. Ol'denburg, on publication of M. Muller's book *Ramakrishna : His Life and Sayings* (Lnd., 1898), could forthwith discern the great role of Ramakrishna in the awakening of India. S. F. Ol'denburg not only wrote this article but also read a paper on Ramakrishna at the Academy of Sciences.
- (32) The translation of the four hymns of the *Rigveda* was published in 1927 in Ukrainian (Kharkov, "Skhid. Svit", no. 1, pp. 186-9).
- (33) II, p. 102.
- (34) P. G. Ritter : *Dandin and His Romance. The Adventures of Ten Youths (On the History of Ancient Indian Belles-Letters)*.—"Zapiski Imperatorskogo Khar'kovskogo Universiteta" [Notes of the . . . Kharkov University], 1898, vol. ii, pp. 1-13. The complete translation made during these years was published only during the Soviet period.

- See Dandin : *Pokhozheniya desyati yunoshei* (*drevne-indiiskii roman*) [Adventures of Ten Princes ; An Ancient Indian Romance], tr. from Sanskrit with introduction and notes by P. G. Ritter, Kharkov, 1928.
- (35) — : *A Short Course of Sanskrit Grammar*, Kharkov, 1904 ; also his *Sanskrit*, Kharkov 1916, G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin report four editions of this Grammar only in pre-Revolution years. (II, p. 102).
- (36) For instance, besides the already indicated translation of the hymns of the *Rigveda*, mention may here be made of the translations of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* (Kharkov, 1929 ; the Russian translation was published already in 1914), Bhartrihari's poems (Kharkov, 1928) and Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* (Kharkov, 1929). Translations of Sanskrit literature (though not from the original) were also made by the distinguished Ukrainian writers Ivan Franko and L. Ukrainka.
- (37) These words of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya also apply to Ol'denburg, Ritter and other distinguished Russian Indologists.
- (38) *Pap. Stch.*, p. xxii.
- (39) Asvaghosa : *Zhizn' Buddy* [Life of Buddha], tr. by K. Bal'mont, with an introductory article by S. Levi. M., 1913.
- Kalidasa : *Sakuntala ; A Drama*, tr. from French by K. Bal'mont. M. 1915.
- : *Dramy* [Dramas], tr. from French by K. Bal'mont ... with an introductory article by S. F. Ol'denburg, M., 1916.
- (40) Roerich's wife, Elena Ivanovna Roerich, was a writer and author of philosophical works on Buddhism and some other topics. His elder son George (Yurii) Nikolaevich Roerich (1902-1960) was an outstanding Orientalist, specialist in Tibetan and Buddhist studies. Recently, his great Tibetan-Russian-English Dictionary (in 15 volumes) has been taken up for publication in Moscow under the aegis of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Yurii Roerich, being acquainted with Suniti Kumar Chatterji, together arranged the first meeting between Nikolai Roerich and Rabindranath Tagore in London in 1920.

Svyatoslav Nikolaevich Roerich (b. 1904) is an eminent artist and social worker. He lives in Bangalore, India.

- (41) Izvara—actually *Isvara* in Sanskrit, means “Supreme Creator.”
- (42) N. K. Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo naslediya* [From the Literary Heritage], M., 1974, p. 121.

The translation of the excerpt is by Harish C. Gupta, the translator of the book. Such passages in the book translated from Russian and Bengali (except where taken from English editions) are translator’s own.

- (43) E. Ya. Lyusternik : *op. cit.*, p. 106.
- (44) See *Perepiska V. V. Vereshchagina i V. V. Stasova* [Correspondence of V. V. Vereshchagin and V. V. Stasov], p. 241. Quot. from E. Ya. Lyusternik, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- (45) “The Times of India”, 15.01.1905.
- (46) Blavatskaya published two books in Russian about her visits to India, under the pseudonym Radda Bai— *Iz peshcher i debrei Indostana* ... [From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan ; Letters Home], M., 1883 ; and *Tri mesyatsa na golubykh gorokh Madrasa* [Three Months in the Blue Mountains of Madras], M., 1884.
- (47) It should be stated here that Annie Besant was involved not simply in theosophy ; she also took part in the Indian national liberation movement and some educational activities.
- (48) In his letter to the editor of the journal “The Light of the East”, Vivekananda unambiguously stated :
 “I have always found occultism injurious and weakening to humanity... For centuries we have been stuffed with the mysterious ; the result is that our intellectual and spiritual digestion is almost hopelessly impaired and down to the depths of hopeless imbecility”—see Dr. Sankari Prasad Basu : *Vivekananda o samakalin Bharat-varsa* [Vivekananda and Contemporary India], vol. iii, p. 83.
- (49) See, for example, V. Brodov : *Indian Philosophy in Modern Times*, M., 1984. In this otherwise serious and scholarly book we find Ramacharaka’s name together with Vivekananda’s. See pp. 268-71.

- (50) Ramacharaka (William Atkinson) : *Hatha-yoga* ... [in Russian]; *Nauka o dykhanii indiiskikh iogov* [Science of Breathing of the Indian Yogis], St. Pbg., 1914; *Osnovy mirosozertsaniya indiiskikh iogov* [Principles of world outlook Indian Yogis], St. Pbg., 1914; *Jnana-yoga*, [in Russian], St. Pbg., 1914; *Religii i tainye ucheniya Vostoka* [Religious and Secret Doctrines of the East], St. Pbg., 1914; *Puti dostizheniya indiiskikh iogov* [Ways of Attaining of the Indian Yogis], St. Pbg., 1914; *Raja-yoga* [in Russian], St. Pbg., 1914.
- (51) R. Rolland mentioned it in his *Life of Leo Tolstoy*. See also A. Shifman : *Tolstoy and India*, 2nd ed., Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1969, p. 10.
- (52) Leo Tolstoy : *Russian Book for Reading*. Pts. i-iv. See A. Shifman : *op. cit.*, pp. 45-7.
- (53) The books which Tolstoy read this time besides the ones on Buddhism which continued to hold his interest, include the best translations in West European languages of the *Vedas* and of some *Upanishads*. For example, in one of the *Vedas* which he read in early 1884 he found a "Hymn to Reason", which he promptly transcribed into his diary.

Here are the words which the Russian writer liked in particular : "Everything is formed by reason. The world is the eye of reason, its source... One who gives oneself to reason becomes immortal." (Leo Tolstoy : *Complete Works* [in Russian ; in 90 vols., M.-L., 1928-58—hereafter referred to as *CW*], vol. 49, p. 63.

For details see A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk's article "Tolstoy and Vivekananda" in the "bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of culture" March (pp. 51-5) and April (pp. 75-9) 1986 issues,—which we recapitulate here. This article was based on the lecture which the author of the present book delivered in Bengali at the Institute, for which he expresses his deep indebtedness to the Institute authorities.

- (54) One of the earliest Indians to write regularly to Tolstoy was Ramaseshan, the editor of the journal "The Aryan." Tolstoy's reply of 25 July 1901 as published in the August issue of the same journal evoked wide response of the Indian readers at large.

Tolstoy also regularly corresponded with Gopal Chetty, the editor of the "New Reformer", and Professor Rama Deva, the editor of the journal "Vedic Magazine"; and these letters, in original, were for the first time published in those journals. Rama Deva sent to Tolstoy his journal and, in addition, some of the best books on the *Vedas*. This helped Tolstoy to delve more deeply into the *Vedas*.

We shall note that even much before his correspondence with Tolstoy was started, Gandhiji published one of the earliest biographical studies of Tolstoy in India, in his journal "Indian Opinion" (in the 2 September 1905 issue). Gandhiji also translated and published in this journal four short stories of Tolstoy.

- (55) Vivekananda's *Lectures on Raja Yoga* (NY, 1896) almost at once after publication was sent to Tolstoy in 1896 by Anendra Kumar Datta, a friend of the well-known Indian musician Dilip Kumar Roy. (See also note 64). The letters known are 5 from Gandhiji (Oct. 1909, Nov. 1909, Apr. 1910, Aug. 1910, Sept. 1910) and 3 from Tolstoy (1 Oct. 1909, Aug. 1910, Sept. 1910). One of Gandhiji's letter (Nov. 1909) was located at Yasnaya Polyana Archives only in 1956. See A. Shifman: *Leo Tolstoy and the East* [In Russian], 2nd ed., p. 165.
- (56) The first Russian book to dwell upon the Vivekananda-Tolstoy theme, among other things, is *Tolstoy and the East*, by A.I. Shifman [A. I. Shifman: *Leo Tolstoy and the East* (in Russian). M., 1960 pp. 194-197; 2nd rev. ed., M., 1971, pp. 127-131. English tr. *Tolstoy and India*, Delhi, Sahitya Akademy, 1969, 2nd ed. 1978 (pp. 25-37)]. He has been for many years associated with the Tolstoy Museum at Yasnaya Polyana. This valuable study, though copious and rich in factual material, devotes only a few pages to the theme, and contains some notes which are not quite correct. The subsequent works dealing with Tolstoy and India—for instance, the extremely interesting chapter "Asia's Reply to Tolstoy" in the well-known work *Tolstoy and Contemporary World* [in Russian; M., 1975] by the Soviet scholar of Tolstoy studies, K. Lomunov;

and the article "Tolstoy and the Literatures of the East" (published in *L. N. Tolstoi i sovremennost'. Sb. statei i materialov* [Tolstoy and the World of His Time]. M., 1981) by the eminent Soviet Indologist, E. P. Chelyshev—are also generally evasive in the matter of Tolstoy's interest in Vivekananda. Only Professor V. S. Kostyuchenko of the Department of Philosophy of the Moscow University, in his fine monograph on Swami Vivekananda, mentions casually that "Vivekananda's Raja-yoga had aroused keen interest in the most diverse countries and amongst the most diverse thinkers—from Leo Tolstoy to one of the founders of pragmatism, Charles James." But Prof. Kostyuchenko has taken this reference not directly from Tolstoy's Works but from Romain Rolland's well-known article entitled "Asia's Reply to Tolstoy." (See V. S. Kostyuchenko : *Vivekananda* [in Russian], M., 1977, p. 122).

- (57) R. Rolland : *Opyt issledovaniya mistiki i dukhovnoi zhizni sovremennoi Indii. Zhizn' Ramakrishny. Zhizn' Vivekanandy* [Experience of Studying Mysticism and Spiritual Life of Modern India. The Life of Ramakrishna. The Life of Vivekananda]—in his *Complete Works* [in Russian], vol. 19, L., 1936, 320 p.

Idem : *Vselenskoe evangelie Vivekanandy*. [The Universal Gospel of Vivekananda]—in his *Complete Works* [in Russian], vol. 20, L., 1936, pp. 7-163.

- (58) Romain Rolland also writes in his "Asia's Reply to Tolstoy" : "The religious firmament of India was most brightly illuminated by stars of the first magnitude that had suddenly started shining in it . . . the two wonders of the spirit : Ramakrishna (1836-1886), the godly inspired man who had enveloped all forms of deity with his love, and his pupil, still more powerful than the teacher, Vivekananda (1863-1903), whose tempestuous energy had awakened the effective god, the god of *Gita*, in his suffering people, for centuries to come . . . (See Romain Rolland : *Complete Works* [in Russian], vol. 14, p. 338.

We may mention here that, for instance, the very first books on India read by Professor E. P. Chelyshev (See his article in *Vivekananda Centenary Volume*,

Calcutta, 1963), as also by the author of this book, were the above quoted Romain Rolland's *Life of Ramakrishna*, *Life of Vivekananda*, *The Universal Gospel of Vivekananda*.

- (59) We shall observe here that it is apparently on the basis of this statement that A. I. Shifman writes without any ground : "There exists an indication that Swami Vivekananda, during his travels in Europe in 1900, intended to visit Yasnaya Polyana (A. I. Shifman : *Leo Tolstoy and the East* [in Russian], M., 1971, p. 131).

Vivekananda intended to visit Russia in April 1897, but this visit did not materialise for reasons not known. (See his letter to Josephine Mac Leod in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. viii, p. 392. There is no reference in Vivekananda's Works or in the literature on him that he intended to visit Yasnaya Polyana in 1900).

- (60) R. Rolland : *Complete Works* [in Russian], vol. 14, p. 338.
 (61) *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 256.
 (62) *Ibid.*, vol. 14, p. 338.

We have quoted these statements of Romain Rolland at length, for these alone provide the correct key to Tolstoy's assessment of Vivekananda. Other works of Western scholars on Tolstoy have only a brief reference that Tolstoy had read *Raja-yoga*. The theme being dwelt upon here did not also find its full expression in India despite the fact that some Indian works have reproduced and interpreted whatever little there is of this in Shifman's book. It is, we may add here, therefore very important to rectify the errors and discrepancies in this work, though we must stress that doing this does not in any way belittle the great contribution of the author, the first to take up this important aspect. One valuable book, containing many interesting ideas and facts on Tolstoy-India theme, is that recently published under the title *Bharat Pathik Tolstoy*, Calcutta 1983, by Jhara Basu, with a foreword by the well-known Bengali writer and literary scholar, Annada Shankar Ray who calls himself a pupil of Tolstoy.

How is it then that, save Romain Rolland, no one has so far made a well established and correct estimate of Vivekananda's place in the life of Tolstoy? This, first of all, as we see, is because Tolstoy did not write any complete commentary on the works of Vivekananda; the observations on the Indian philosopher lie scattered on the pages of his less accessible works and cannot be pieced together without surveying a large amount of material and without scrupulous analysis. Secondly, this is also sometimes due to lacunae in proper study of the complex world outlook of the writer and sometimes to the one-sided approach to it.

- (63) D. P. Makovitsky : *Yasnopolyanskies zapiski* [Notes from Yasnaya Polyana],—*Literaturnoe nasledstvo* [Literary Heritage], vol. 90, bks. 1, 2, 3 & 4, M., 1981 (Hereafter Mak.).

- (64) Dilip Kumar Roy mentions this in his book *Tirthankar* (new ed., Calcutta, 1982 pp. 21-2) while recapitulating his own conversion with Romain Rolland :

"*Romain Rolland* : You will be surprised, Dilip, if I tell you that Tolstoy, in the last years of his life, was charmed by Vivekananda's writings. Tolstoy's close friend, P. Biryukov, and numerous other scholars keep reciting Vivekananda's name even now. In Russia, specially, there are even more of such people.

Dilip Roy : That they are so influenced by Vivekananda I did not know. All I knew was that Tolstoy, in the last years of his life, was charmed by Vivekananda, and this because a Bengali friend of mine had sent to him . . . a copy of Vivekananda's *Raja-yoga*. Tolstoy had later written to him, 'It is doubtful if in this age [another] man has ever risen above selfless spiritual meditation'."

- (65) Dilip Kumar Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Also in Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 81, p. 220.

- (66) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 53, p. 106.

- (67) On 14 October of the same year 1896 he wrote to P. V. Verigin (1859-1924) [the leader of the big group of *dukhoboras*, followers of Tolstoy. He went away to Canada in 1902 after 15-year exile. He was correspondent of Leo Tolstoy, who wrote sixteen letters to

Verigin between 1895 and 1909]: "Thanks to books, I have come in contact, this present autumn, with a Hindu, who fully shares with us our Christian views and has sent me a book of a compatriot of his, expounding the doctrine of the Brahmins, having semblance with the *essence* (emphasis mine—author) of the teaching of Christ" (*CW*, vol. 69, p. 169). Thus, Tolstoy found in Vivekananda's work an echo of his own reflections on the true essence of Christianity cleansed from later distortions. It is therefore difficult to agree with A.I. Shifman who believes that "in the passionate tirades of Vivekananda, Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teaching of the ancient Indians, particularly many motifs of the Vedas congenial to him. (A. Shifman : *Tolstoy and India*, p. 33).

- (68) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 69, p. 169. See also note 31.

Tolstoy may have read Ol'denburg's article (1900) on Ramakrishna Paramahansa (note 31) earlier than 1903.

- (69) *Ibid.*, vol. 76, pp. 98-9.

- (70) Mak. : vol. ii, p. 64.

- (71) Surendranath Mukherjee, philosopher and public man. He had emigrated from India to USA and was in Los Angeles publishing the journal "The Light of Asia" which he sent regularly to Tolstoy till his death. In 1907 he returned to India and wrote several books. Died in Calcutta in 1914. Many numbers of the journal, with Tolstoy's notes, are preserved in Yasnaya Polyana Library. See A. Shifman : *Tolstoy and India*, pp. 55-60.

- (72) Baba Premananda Bharati : *Shri Krishna—the Lord of Love*, NY, 1904.

- (73) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 77, pp. 37-8.

- (74) Mak. : vol. ii, p. 457.

- (75) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 77, p. 151.

- (76) See : (i) "My Teacher", speech made by Swami Vivekananda at the Vedanta Society in New York, published in Russian translation, in the anthology *V doline skorbi* [In the Spaces of Sorrow], M., 1907, pp. 183-204.

(ii) "God and Man", speech made by Swami Vivekananda,—in the anthology : I. Nazhivin : *Golosa narodov* [Voices of the Peoples], M., 1908, pp. 65-79.

(iii) *Gimn tvoreniya* [Hymn of Creation], in the same anthology of Nazhivin, pp. 80-1.

A. Shifman's statement that Tolstoy read Vivekananda's "Speeches and Writings" in 1907 obviously does not correspond to facts.

(77) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 78, p. 151.

(78) *Ibid.*, vol. 78, pp. 84-5.

(79) *Ibid.*, vol. 56, p. 129

(80) These books were sent to Tolstoy by S. R. Chitale.

(81) *Mak.* : vol. iii, p. 94.

(82) Unfortunately, these books, so far as we know, have not been located. We are only left with notes in Tolstoy's own diary and also the day-to-day notes (for instance, for 5, 21, 23 and from 26 to 29 June, 1908) of D. P. Makovitsky. We shall be citing some of these notes here.

(83) *Mak.* : vol. iii, p. 106. It may be remarked here that some scholars and literary critics claim that Tolstoy censured Vivekananda for his belief in violent means of struggle against evil. This wrong understanding, it appears, originates from the assertion made by Bhupendranath Dutta (see, for example, Jhara Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 22), who seems to go to the extent of saying that Tolstoy did so in his letter to Taraknath Das. The letter is available in numerous publications, including Tolstoy's *Complete Works* (vol. 37, pp. 245-72), but we did not find any such censure there.

(84) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 122.

(85) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 125. Makovitsky continued : "And, later, while I was galvanising his head, he read Vivekananda and underlined some sentences.

What precisely interested Tolstoy at this time and what he was reflecting upon can be understood by referring to an entry in his diary on 26 June 1908 : "Felt now for the first time the possibility, as Vivekananda says, that 'I' could completely yield to 'you'. Felt the possibility of self-denial not for the sake of anything but for the sake of sound sense... It is most difficult and

even most necessary to escape from this terrible indulgence with self and with one's 'I'. And I am beginning—now before my death to sense the possibility of such renunciation of one's "I". [For me] it's not much of a virtue." (*CW*, vol. 56, p. 137).

- (86) So one should not take in literal sense (as sometimes done by A. Shifman and other scholars) such note of L. Tolstoy as he, for example, made to Chertkov on 28 June 1908: "Vivekananda greatly disappoints me. He writes about miracles which he has seen and himself performed... How oddly it conjoins with depth of thought." (*Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 126). And, on 29 June 1908, he records in his diary: "I am reading a Hindu,—very witty, verbose and blank. He wants to justify their belief in subjective beings and their doubts in them... One thing is and one thing undoubted: *My life and my freedom* and the need to decide how to live it, only this alone is the basis of all religions, the basis of all philosophies. And this alone exists." (*CW*, vol. 56, p. 364). Leo Tolstoy does not notice that he is possibly contradicting his own self, contradicting that note which he had made in his diary on 26 June.
- (87) See note 48. Sankari Prasad Basu, in his already published six-volume work *Vivekananda o samakalin Bharatvarsha* [Vivekananda and Contemporary India] gives an excellent and exhaustive treatment of this question of Vivekananda versus theosophists (*op. cit.*, vol. iii, pp. 39-113).
- See also V. S. Kostyuchenko: *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- (88) Kamenskaya, Pisareva and others. We feel, Tolstoy gathered this wrong impression about Vivekananda's belief in miracles from writings or talks of the theosophists who had a penchant for such things. Tolstoy would never have formed this wrong impression if only he had read Vivekananda's speeches against miracles.
- (89) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 127.
- (90) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 128.
- (91) Leo Tolstoy: *CW*, vol. 56, p. 138. In this note L. Tolstoy continued: "Only one thing is not true—that is when he begins with (objective) judgment about the world." (*ibid*). As we see, Tolstoy here takes the

ground of uncognisability of the highest source. Further, he ponders over problems of destruction of evil and of enhancing the good and, in his diary, makes a note of Vivekananda's ideas which he fully subscribes to: "Vivekananra says that the eternal destruction of evil and enhancement of good are not possible, but this is not possible only because of the notion of time or because of the notion of implementation. But there should be neither of these. Increasing of the good in myself and in the world is life—mine as well as that of the world. This increase cannot be achieved [but one must try, for] the process of this increase is life itself—fulfilling one's purpose in life—by increasing of good, I am only fulfilling my purpose." (*CW*, vol. 56, p. 365).

(92) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 56, p. 361.

(93) When 22 years old Taraknath Das emigrated from Bengal to Canada and formed a revolutionary group. In order to propagate his ideas he started in Vancouver, the journal "Free Hindustan." He sent two issues of this journal to Leo Tolstoy and a letter on 24 May, 1908. He wrote to the great Russian writer: "By your publicist writings you have brought great good to Russia. We beseech you, if only you could make the time, to write an article and to state your opinion about the sad position of India. On behalf of millions of Indians dying of hunger I appeal to your Christian spirit and I beg you to support us."

This letter was considered lost for half a century and was discovered in Tolstoy's Archives in 1956. It was published in the journal "Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie" [Soviet Oriental Studies], 1957, no. 1 (See Shifman, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-71). For details about Taraknath Das see N. M. Gol'dberg's article "Indian Journals in the Yasnaya Polyana Library as One of the Sources for the Study of the National Liberation Movement in India," in "Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie," 1955, no. 4.

As is known, the "Letter to a Hindu" was one of the reasons for Mahatma Gandhi to address Leo Tolstoy. We can mention here that we discovered in Rabindra Bhavana an almost unknown translation of R. Tagore's

Letters from Russia in one of American magazines in which Taraknath Das much later in 30's made some contributions. Taraknath Das also wrote a book (1932) on religious, social and political ideals of Tagore.

(94) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 37, pp. 245-72. Was published in Gandhiji's journal "Indian Opinion", no. 1 (1910).

(95) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 333

(96) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 38, p. 68.

(97) *Mak.*, vol. iii, p. 104.

(98) For instance, on 24 June 1909, he makes an interesting observation in respect of *Vekhi*, the well-known collection of Russian philosophical tracts of early 20th century : "It is not worth reading *Vekhi* . . . when one has such [things] for reading as Ramakrishna, the Buddha, Vivekananda, the Gospel . . ." (*Mak.*, vol. iii, note of 24 June 1909).

Later, on 29 March 1910, when Tolstoy meets the famous Czech thinker, statesman and revolutionary, Jan Massaryk, and, among other things, asks him if he reads Indian philosophy, he tells Massaryk that the greatest philosopher of modern India is Vivekananda. (*Mak.*, vol. iv, p. 213).

(99) *Mak.*, vol. iv, p. 196.

(100) *Ibid.*

It is interesting to note here that Tolstoy has this heightened interest in Indian philosophy at a time when he, as he says, is going further and further away from Christianity. (*Mak.*, vol. iv, notes of 13 August 1908). It is possible that this was due to Tolstoy's reading of two volumes of Vivekananda.

(101) Leo Tolstoy : *CW*, vol. 81, p. 220.

(102) After Tolstoy's death, his followers, including Nazhivin in particular, arranged the publication of Russian translations of a number of books of Vivekananda, as also of *Gospel of Ramakrishna* and of Max Mueller's books on Ramakrishna. We give a list of these books : (1) *Filosofiya yoga* (Philosophy of Yoga) ; Lectures given in New York in the winter of 1895 on Raja-yoga, including also Patanjali's aphorisms with commentary, tr.

by Ya. Popov, Sosnitsa, 1911. (2) Swami Vivekananda : *Prakticheskaya Vedanta* [Practical Vedanta], M., 1912. (3) *Karma-yoga*, M., 1912 (2nd ed. : Pgd., 1916). (4) *Bhakti-yoga* ; Lectures, rev. and pub. by S. Saradananda, tr. from 2nd Calcutta ed. by Ya. Popov, St. Pbg., 1914. (5) Ramakrishna : *Provozvestie Ramakrishny*, tr. from Eng. ed., with a foreword and introd. by Swami Abhedananda, St. Pbg., 1914. (6) M. Mueller : *Filosovya Vedanty* tr. from English by N.F. Nazhivin, M., 1912. (7) M. Mueller : *Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, His Life and Doctrine*, tr. from English by N.F. Nazhivin, M., 1913.

- (103) Tolstoy, no doubt, would have at once appreciated Tagore too only if he knew about him. But unfortunately, this was not destined to be. Tagore probably came to know about Tolstoy in 1880's (if not earlier) because, in 1880, Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya's Letters and articles on Russia had already been published in "Bharati". Tagore had certainly become familiar with Tolstoy's writings by 1889 because we do find a mention of *Anna Karenina* in one of his letters of 1889. [We shall again talk of this later]. Henceforth Tolstoy is found mentioned many times in Tagore's writings.

However, Tagore possibly could not bring himself to initiate any correspondence with Tolstoy.

**CHAPTER
THREE**

RUSSIA DISCOVERS TAGORE

*A whole people and a whole civilisation
are reflected in Tagore's songs.
Tagore is the first sage who does not
repudiate life but all the time glorifies
its joys.*

I. V. SHKLOVSKY (1913)

The first Russian translation (1913) of Tagore¹ was a real revelation, a discovery of an altogether new world of modern Indian poetry at its zenith.² It embodied a new aesthetics which merged so naturally the true crest and crystal purity of emotions with deep feelings of joy that life gives. It was a poetry not of rejection but of acceptance of life³ which defied death itself. The reader's heart missed a beat.

This poetry seemed to have nothing of what the reader had become accustomed to know as "Indian wisdom". It was intensely personal and modern, and lacked that usual accent of asceticism.⁴ It had something so familiar, so close to the reader, something responding to his own spiritual aspirations and needs, and at the same time so truly Indian, so peculiarly Indian, but not difficult to comprehend.

And the inexpressible charm of this poetry held the reader in thrall, sublimated him, helped him to get into the infinite beauty of life that is here on earth. It taught him to love what "is here on this side". It soothed the soul, and flooded it with life, true strength and courage. It sought to lead "into that heaven of freedom where the mind is without fear and where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic wall".⁵ Tagore's poetry thus even helped to overcome the spiritual crisis through which, as we know, a part of Russian intelligentsia was then passing.

. True, individual fantasies and perceptions did take some readers far from what the poet meant to express ; but one thing common to all was that none was indifferent to or untouched by this phenomenon which was Tagore. In short, as the eminent Soviet writer, Konstantin Paustovsky, then quite young, put it, "Rabindranath Tagore reigned over the minds".⁶ We observed in the previous chapter that Leo Tolstoy's high estimate of Vivekananda, who symbolised the modern dimensions of Indian thought reflected the attraction that Russian intelligentsia continually had for India. Tolstoy's no doubt, was a

personal view, but, then, he was one of the greatest representatives of his country, having a vital influence on the minds of his contemporaries. So the immediate success of Tagore's works amongst the broadest strata of Russian society was only the culminating point of this vast interest.

The feelings of Tagore's contemporaries in Russia on first knowing him were expressed, with penetrating insight, by the great Russian artist and scholar, Nikolai Roerich, in the "Pages from My Diary". He begins his note on Tagore with reminiscences of Leo Tolstoy who had just passed away⁷ :

I remember how Elena Ivanovna first brought me this news [of Tolstoy's sad demise], repeating "incredible, incredible!" Indeed something had gone away from Russia herself. Life had indeed been delimited . . . In the same way, Elena Ivanovna brought quite another news. As she often chanced to find in the book-shops something latest, essential and inspired, she had also located Tagore's *Gitanjali*, translated by Baltrushaitis.⁸ These sincere heart-touching melodies shone like a rainbow; and had an unusual cadence in Baltrushaitis' Russian figurative verse . . . Till now we knew Tagore only in bits. Of course, we knew how Tagore's name was uppermost *in the mind of the whole world* (emphasis mine—author) but we Russians didn't yet have a chance to touch the depths of the Poet's heart.⁹

We shall interrupt Roerich's words to say that he is not right. Tagore was then not at all known in the whole world, including in Russia¹⁰ (except in his own native India, of course). Roerich had no idea of this even till many years later.¹¹

How is it that Tagore came to be known in Russia so late? Why did Russia and the West need almost forty years to have access to Tagore's spiritual, creative wealth? The reasons are multiple and diverse. One of these, and the most important reason, was aptly noted by the well-known Russian translator and literary critic, A.E. Gruzinsky (1858-1930) while observing that the "*Encyclopaedia Britannica* where, of all the places, one would have reasonably hoped to find some information on Tagore, has no entry under 'Tagore' in its latest, 1911 edition, and no reference to him in the articles on languages and lite-

ratures of India. And this when Tagore already has more than almost three decades of poetic work behind him and a great reputation in his country."¹²

In the conditions of colonial regime, the tempestuous upsurge of modern Indian literatures, with Bengali literature having a pivotal place, obviously went unnoticed on the part of the British litterateurs and scholars despite their closest connections with India.

Another main reason, as we have already seen in the previous chapters, was that the chain of continuance of study of modern Indian culture in Russia was broken by the foolish, unthoughtful Czarist bureaucracy, and it was possible to restore the links only after the Great October Socialist Revolution. The works of almost all (with the exception of Pavel Petrov) eminent Russian Indologists like I.P. Minaev, F.I. Shcherbatskoi, were limited to the study of ancient India.

Besides, there also existed the impression that the modern literature of India was only second-rate in comparison with the ancient. This was largely because of the unconscious complex growing in the West of the superiority of Western science and literature to the modern Indian. This tendency was also, in a definite measure, prevalent during the Czarist times in some circles of Russian Indology; and we would in vain look for translations of works of modern Indian writers during these pre-Revolution years. As Academician A. P. Barannikov, one of the prominent Soviet Indologists, later put it, "Until the beginning of the 20th century, modern Indian languages were not studied at all in Russia. Only in early 20's were published some Urdu grammars,¹³ imperfect in outer form, but giving some notion of the language".¹⁴

We now come back to Nikolai Roerich's "Pages from My Diary" :

Gitanjali was a complete revelation; the poems were read at parties and in inner chambers, giving way to such rare mutual understanding as nothing but true talent alone could provide. The capacity for inspiring confidence was marvellous, the principle of beauty enigmatic, and every unsullied human heart fluttered and felt

exhilarated at the spark of the beautiful light. The age-old love and wisdom of the East had found its manifestation and touching echo in the convincing words of the poet . . . Everyone believed and believes that Tagore belongs not to the commonplace world of conventional facts but to the world of great truth and beauty. The dream of meeting him somewhere took firm hold. Won't destiny take us once again to see here in this world one who gave such a powerful call for beauty—over-powering beauty.¹⁵

For Nikolai Roerich, as also for some others,¹⁶ Tagore seemingly became, after Leo Tolstoy, the living embodiment of the crest and power of the human spirit.

Translations of Tagore's writings began to be published one after the other—two separate collections of his writings;¹⁷ individual works;¹⁸ translations in Russian periodicals.¹⁹ The same book of Tagore was translated almost at the same time by different translators.

Thus, translations of *Gitanjali* were made by six different translators—A.P. Khavkina (1913); N.A. Pusheshnikov, the nephew of the famous writer, Ivan Bunin (1914); the distinguished Russian and Lithuanian poet Baltrushaitis (1914); A.S. Sludsky (1914); S.V. Tatarinova, member of the Theosophical Society (1914) and A.D. Runovskaya (1915).²⁰ The translations of *Gardener* were by four—N.A. Pusheshnikov (1914); the well-known litterateur V.G. Tardov (1914); V. Spasskaya (1915); E. I. Saishnikova (1917).²¹ The *Crescent Moon* was translated by three—M. Likiardopulo (1914); P. Vasin (1915) and S.V. Tatarinova (1915).²² Tagore's philosophical lectures *Sadhana* came out in 1914 in two translations—by V. Pogossky; and by I.F. Gretman and V.S. Lempitsky.²³

Tagore's plays were also published in 1915 in several different translations—*Chitra* [*Chitrangada*], translated by M. Podgorichani and by V. Spasskaya;²⁴ *The King of the Dark Chamber*, by Z. Vengerova, the well-known writer and also the author of the most comprehensive study of Tagore in those years, and also by M. Rodon;²⁵ *The Post-Office* was translated by V. Spasskaya and also by M. Rodon.²⁶

The most voluminous (314 p.) of Tagore's books then published in Russia was a collection of 13 short stories (1915), and this here needs a rather detailed discussion.

This book *Iz zhizni Bengalii. Rasskazy* [From Bengal Life : Short Stories]²⁷ was a translation into Russian, by A. I. and A. F. Sludsky, of an Indian edition (published under the title *Glimpses of Bengal Life*), with a foreword not much different from that of the translator Rajani Ranjan Sen in the Indian edition (Madras, 1913).²⁸ This book came as a surprise even to those who knew all translations of Tagore's works in the West.

Such a book had not been published in London or New York. In the West Tagore's short stories, differently selected, were published by Macmillan & Co., under the title *Hungry Stones* only after a year, viz. in 1916.²⁹ So the Russian publisher V. Portugalov was able to locate and procure this first published book of Tagore in India. V. Portugalov intended to include in his Russian publication also the translation of the *Eyesore (Chokher Bali)* published in 1914 in the Calcutta journal "The Modern Review,"³⁰ but this was not done for reasons unknown.³¹

These *Stories from Bengal Life* at once became a sensation and a bibliographical rarity, because those who admired Tagore and had read many of his works—poems, plays, philosophical articles—were surprised still more to find that this original, unique poet, gifted playwright and profound philosopher was also an excellent story teller. He astounded the readers with his mature realism combined with a sort of lyricism of writing. This lyrical accent imparted a special subtlety to the writing and enhanced its expressiveness, and in no way meddled with realism. These stories, we feel, to some extent, remind the reader of the early stories of Maxim Gorky,³² one of the most outstanding Russian writers after Leo Tolstoy, and the most popular in Russia already during those days to combine singularly the 'cruel' realism with characteristic romantic tone.

Tagore's stories were imbued with humanistic and democratic world outlook, sympathy for the anxieties of the ordinary people, ability to see the "great" in the "little". The power and the light of the writer's humanism were so great that

even the tragic events or tragic ends of the stories (these were dominant, reflecting the real life of the Indians in colonial India, fettered by the burden of outlived traditions and customs) did not leave behind any painful memories, or did not mortify the reader, and rather made him ponder as to how to live, how to live a life that would be free from such tragic happenings.

All this amply shows the baselessness of the prevailing impression that pre-Revolution Russia knew Tagore only as a poet, even an "exotic poet."³³

We shall come back to this towards the end of this chapter ; here we may only remark that it is difficult to understand how some scholars failed to "notice" this publication in 1915 of a collection of Tagore's stories, the most complete for that time. Not only this. In their studies many scholars even now either ignore Tagore's writings in this genre, one of the most prevalent in modern world literature, or do them injustice by giving too little space to them, or simply give a subjective assessment.³⁴ Therefore, we consider it necessary to say here a few words on how the Bengali and other literary scholars who knew Tagore's work in original Bengali in its entirety, appraise Tagore's stories, and also as to how Tagore himself looks on them.

First of all, in Bengali literature, Rabindranath Tagore was the first to introduce this, rather most popular genre, having no tradition to fall upon. With the power of his unique talent he, already in the early 90's of the last³⁵ century, wrote over 40 stories almost in a cycle, and these were in no way inferior to the best specimens in the world literature.

Almost immediately on the publication of the very first stories, the literary critic Jadunath Sarkar wrote in 1894 :

The short stories by Rabindranath Tagore would last longer than his poems, because his short stories reflect the real life more perfectly. The reality of life, in particular, the modern life, that projects itself through Tagore's short stories is unique and was totally absent in earlier Bengali literature. With excellent artistic perfection he has been able to portray this life and bring to focus its hard reality.³⁶

Again, in one of the very first, no doubt successful, monographs published in the West (with the exception of Russia where Tagore's stories, as we have just seen), were appreciated earlier, the English poet Rhys (1915) states :

He has known how to develop for his own use a sympathetic and thoroughly congenial form of short story... He is able to gain effects which a Nathaniel Hawthorne or a Turgenev might envy him... There are critics who know Rabindranath's writings intimately in their original form and say that his finest work lies not in his songs or in his plays but in his short stories.³⁷

Later, in 1921, E. Thompson, one of the few Tagore scholars in the West to have known Bengali and studied Tagore in the original made a concise and specific observation :

The stories, the best of them are excellent stories... The outstanding qualities of the best stories put him among the world's greatest short story writers.³⁸

Similar is the assessment made by the well-known Czech scholar, Professor V. Lesny,³⁹ who lived with Tagore for a long time at Santiniketan.

We shall also quote here a few statements by major Bengali literary scholars, which we find most authentic.

The eminent researcher of Bengali prose, Srikumar Banerjee, sees the perennial significance of Tagore's stories in that "in most of his stories Tagore analyses the acute problems, subtle changes and latent sources of life. He unfurled before the exhilarated and amazed look of the readers that stream of life which is not seen under the cover of the meagre, insignificant routine, which is filled with tears and deep feelings, and which reveals his capacity for unusually clear and bright perception of life and sharp intuition."⁴⁰

Some Indian scholars find in Russian literature interesting analogies of significance of Tagore's stories. Thus, the well-known literary scholar, Dhurjatiprasad Mukhopadhyaya, noted : "It was Gorky who said that all Russian stories came out of Gogol's *Cloak*. Similarly, almost all Bengali short stories... have come out of the matrices hidden in Tagore's toga."⁴¹

The writer himself said with keen insight : "These short stories are far more dear to me than other works of mine. The joy and satisfaction which I felt in my younger days when

I travelled in the villages of Bengal ... have ever remained in my memory ...," he wrote in one of his letters.⁴²

The statements quoted here are in no way exhaustive; and this certainly does not at all mean that we are in any way undermining the great poet in him. Of course, he is no less great in poetry, particularly in the songs which are now sung everywhere.

One wonders if any writer from abroad was published so much in Russia even before the Revolution as Tagore. All that was published of him in London in English was translated and brought out in Moscow and St. Petersburg (later Petrograd) either in journals or in individual editions.⁴³ Besides, the Russian translators and publishers, as we saw, even had the ingenuity of finding translations of works of Tagore unknown to the English readers and published only in India.

Tagore's works were published not only in Russian but also in Lettish, Lithuanian, Armenian, Georgian, Uzbek and other languages⁴⁴—something uncommon in the conditions of Czarist Russia.

These publications naturally gave rise to copious critical literature. A careful analysis of the numerous assessments on life and work of Tagore scattered on the pages of periodicals and in prefaces and introductions of books published before the Revolution gives us extremely interesting and, on the whole, correct idea of this great Indian.

Not strictly following the chronological principle, we start our analysis with a reference to short stories for the reasons stated above.

Even before the publication of *Stories from Bengal Life*, the well-known writer, poet and translator, V. P. Lebedev, in 1914, was obviously able to familiarise himself with the translations of Tagore's stories published in India, and was thus the first in the West and in Russia to publish a critical appreciation of the realism of Tagore's prose: "The short stories from Bengal life are resplendent with exceptional talent. These are a series of brilliant, extraordinarily vital and just portraits of the way of life of the people."⁴⁵

However, as we noted even earlier, the distinguished Russian revolutionary and sociologist, P. A. Kropotkin (1842-1921) was, so far as we have been able to establish, the first to voice his admiration of the high skill of Tagore's stories long, long before the others did so. He was an elected member of the British Scientific Association, and while in London met there the famous Indian scientist Jagdish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), the close friend of Rabindranath Tagore. Dr. J. C. Bose read out to his Russian friend the English translation of one of Tagore's best known short stories *Cabuliwalla*.⁴⁶ Overjoyed, Kropotkin exclaimed that the story reminded him of the best works of Russian classical writers. J. C. Bose's efforts to have the story published in England proved futile, for, as we noted, the West was not interested in modern Indian literature. Patrice Gedi, the British biographer of J. C. Bose, writes :

Tagore, though occupying the foremost literary position in India, was not at that time known in Europe, and Bose felt keenly that the West had not the opportunity of realising his friend's greatness. So during his second visit to England, in 1900, he had one of his stories, *Cabuliwalla*, translated into English. Prince Kropotkin—a good critic in letters as well as science—declared it to be the most pathetic story he had ever heard, reminding him of the greatest writers among his countrymen; and Bose submitted it to "Harper's Magazine". It was declined, because the West was not sufficiently interested in Oriental life! The time had not yet come; but Bose during his last visit to America in 1915, when Tagore's fame was reaching its meridian, did not fail to utilise the opportunity to rub this in when Harper was publishing one of his own articles.⁴⁷

The English translation of the short story *Cabuliwalla* was later published in Indian paper "New India"; this was one of the first published English translation of a work of Tagore in India.⁴⁸

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The Russian translators of the *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, A. I. and A. F. Sludsky, by reproducing the Indian translator's Preface, further developed the appraisal of the stories made earlier by V. P. Lebedev. Giving an extensive and brilliant evaluation of the realism of Tagore, this Preface also compares these short

stories with those of Leo Tolstoy and Maupassant. The translators write :

The short stories of Tagore are scraps of life itself, sometimes coloured in the sparks of his rich imagination . . . scenes of Bengali village painted in brilliant colours . . . these stories portray thousands of small details of unsophisticated homely life of the simple people . . . the short stories of Tagore are an evidence of the writer's subtle understanding of the turns of national life manifest in love and hate, joy and sorrow ; his descriptions are full of power and skill of a genius. In this respect his short stories have the same place in world literature as those of Maupassant and Chateaubriand. In realism and in subtle understanding and portrayal of human soul his stories can be compared with those of godly Tolstoy.⁴⁹

This volume contained 13 short stories of Tagore ; and was the largest of all the books of Tagore published both before the Revolution and in the early years after the Revolution.

The first to introduce Tagore to Russia was the well-known journalist, I. V. Shklovsky (Dioneo) (1865-1935), the London correspondent of the "Russkie Vedomosti" [Russian News], who, besides being a literary critic and prose writer, was also a poet in his own right. It should be emphasized that he paid attention both to Tagore's poetry and prose, and at once translated not only fragments from then just published *Gitanjali* but also a short story *Vicharaka* [The Judge], and published these in the first issue of an anthology *Slovo* [The Words] in Moscow in 1913. We have no idea of Shklovsky's source, but he apparently took this story from an Indian publication.⁵⁰ So far as we know, this was the very first translation, both in the West and in Russia, of a short story of Tagore.

To the Russian readers this story was particularly interesting, for it was reminiscent of the accents and tones in Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, though written earlier. It would be relevant here to know that the second story of Tagore to be so translated and published in Russia in 1914 (and again in 1915), in the form of a separate booklet, was *Subhashini* (or, *Shubha*, tr. by A. F. Gretman).⁵¹

In the Introduction to his translation, Shklovsky wrote :

Rabindranath Tagore is a great national poet... In his country Tagore has long been famous... His songs, set to music by the poet himself, are now sung by tens of millions of peasants everywhere where Bengali is spoken... His songs are also in harmony with us. Tagore is the bard of life, singer of love and joys inspired by the contemplation of the cosmos... his simplicity, cheerfulness, sincerity and depth of thought often remind us of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

The author further notes : "Rabindranath is the first sage who not only does not repudiate life but all the time glorifies its joys."⁵² Appraising the philosophical credo of Tagore, Shklovsky cited the poet himself :

He (god) is there where the tiller is tilling the
hard ground...

The same stream of life that runs through
my veins night and day,

Runs through the world⁵³

Referring to *Gitanjali*, Shklovsky states that "it doubtless shows that the great era of renaissance has started in the mysterious, beautiful country, a whole people and a whole civilisation are reflected in these songs."⁵⁴

The author sums up his general impression of the poetry of Tagore in these beautiful words :

World is a dark dungeon. But beyond the dungeon
there yet is a whole beautiful world where there is still
morning.⁵⁵

Welcoming and appreciating the publication of the anthology *Slovo*, the literary critic, V. Kranikhfeld, in his article "Literary Echoes" devoted to the analysis of the work of Russian symbolists, writes that the contents of this anthology side-track the ideals of the symbolists, destroy their deceptive illusions, and affirm life... *Tagore is the singer of life, joyous life, consecrated and made meaningful by labour.*" (emphasis mine—author). He specially stresses that "the motives of passive reverie and reflection which," in his view, "form an inevitable part of the poetry of ancient India, of the cradle of Buddhism, are totally wanting in the songs of Rabindranath Tagore."⁵⁶

This remark is significant because some Russian readers of the time were indeed bored of deceptive illusions, of idle sermonising on renunciation, passive reverie and reflection, and sought something fresh and healthy, which was there in Tagore.

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The author of the first complete translation of *Gitanjali* into Russian, L. B. Khavkina, called Tagore pantheist and mystic, philosopher and reformer, discerning in his work even biblical motifs, for, in her opinion, Brahma-Samaj was seemingly associated with Christianity. This view obviously was wrong ; but what is indeed important is that she emphasized the patriotism of the poet then grieving over the fate of his country, and accentuated one of the most progressive elements in Tagore's world outlook, placing the poet much higher than many of his contemporaries,—viz. the denouncing of the caste system. "We hear condemnation of caste system from the Poet's own mouth ; and this opinion voiced by a native Hindu is important for the country reeling under the oppression of complex, inexorable caste system."⁵⁷ Commenting on Tagore's credo, the critic cited from *Gitanjali* : "He (God) is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in the sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off the holy mantle, and even like him come down to the dusty soil."⁵⁸

What mysticism is there in this citation by the translator ? It is instead a hymn to labour and to men of labour.

The critic, V. P. Lebedev, referring to *Gitanjali*, also observes in his aforementioned article (1914) :

The religious ideals of *Gitanjali* are the embodiment in poetic form of legends and traditions native to Tagore.

The author rightly emphasizes that Tagore's poems are "a powerful hymn to spiritual joys of life," but he adds that "these are marked by powerful influence of mysticism."⁵⁹ This, we feel, is simply the stamp of the day.⁶⁰

Evaluating highly the poems included in the collection *Gardener* for their special purity and epic lucidity of mood, V. P. Lebedev notes : "Tagore is a sublime lyricist, distinctive in his calm, tender and elegant idylls something like the forceful, lucid lyricism of the great Goethe."⁶¹

The author concludes that Tagore's work is characterised by such unsophisticated clarity that his songs have reached the common people ; these, besides, breathe such power of thought and are so original and perfect in their form that they captivate and charm also the reader educated in the European style.⁶² He thus speaks not really of mysticism but of closeness of Tagore's songs to the common man, of their folklore roots, and, like Shklovsky, also tries to find typological affinity with world literature.

Here, it is interesting to observe that some translators of Tagore's poetry, while appreciating the traditional assessment, were, nonetheless, even able to discern elements of realism in it. Thus, in the second volume of the aforesaid Russian collections of Tagore's Works (which contained poems from *Gardener*), the translator, V. G. Tardov, wrote in his Preface : "All contemplation of the world, all 'mood' of this revived Brahmanism found reflection in Tagore's poetry like all ancient Aryan wisdom in Ramakrishna's parables and sermons. This is pantheism, close to the pantheism of the Upanishads and Vedanta." The translator emphasized the profoundly national character of Tagore's work : "He is the offspring of the spiritual culture of the East, as Byron was of the English culture of early 19th century and Pushkin of the Russian." Further, Tardov tried to draw parallels with other poets of the 'East' ; the greatest influence on Tagore, according to him, was that of Hafiz. Here, the translator rightly noted that *Tagore's 'mysticism' was simply a tribute to classical traditions* (emphasis mine—author). "These images, like some special turns and comparisons, are common to all the 'mystic' poets of the East and seem to form a sort of a classical 'arsenal' of poetry. Besides, Tagore unfolds before us whole mines of images born of his enormous personal talent."⁶³

Most noteworthy are V. G. Tardov's observations with regard to the style of *Gardener*—observations which, seemingly, have not lost their significance to this day :

These poems sing not only of the moods of the author's soul but also of that simple rural life of India which inspired these moods. We have here before us living people, living nature and most 'ordinary' episodes of life. The

uncommon and the poetic is here revealed in the most common and ordinary. For harmony, both the style and the language of these poems are also simple . . . in most of his poems, he uses the most ordinary idiom and words, sometimes even from the lower depths—'base' so called of the olden days—specially, in the humorous poems.⁶⁴

Tardov's remark seems to have the embryo of the subsequent estimate of Tagore's poetry by the brilliant Soviet scholar and statesman, A. V. Lunacharsky (1875-1933),⁶⁵ later close to Tagore,—which also in a way sums up the general impression of the Soviet reader to this day. Unlike other critics, Tardov rejects the idea of Tagore being a mystic and tries to explain why some scholars call him so. Tardov has rightly grasped the affinity of the language of Tagore's poems with that of the common man.

Authentic and hitherto unknown biographical information on Tagore was given in an article published in 1914 in the most popular journal of the time, "Niva". The author of the article, Z. L'vovsky states *inter alia* that Tagore wrote his best works between the age of 25 and 35, possibly amidst serious, sad privations. L'vovsky here probably has in mind the death of Kadambari Devi (the wife of Rabindranath's elder brother) who, critics say, had been Tagore's inspiration.⁶⁷ L'vovsky apprises his readers that Tagore came to the fore not simply as a poet but also as a musician. For example, his first major work in this field, written in the 18th years of his age, was an opera.⁶³

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The last and the most comprehensive article on Tagore published in Russia before the Revolution was by the well-known poetess, literary critic and translator, Z. A. Vengerova (1867-1941). This article appeared first in the journal "Sovremennik" [The Contemporary] in 1915, and later formed the Preface in the fourth volume of Tagore's *Collected Works* published in the same year.⁶⁹

Vengerova rightly stresses the "modernness" of Tagore. She even notes the political threat that Tagore's activity could pose for the British colonial powers.

The poetess writes that the deep impression made by the works of Tagore is "in a considerable measure, due to the

fact that Tagore comes from India. But this, to some extent, throws to the background what is most important in him—that which in him is not from ancient India but from the modern times, that *which makes him not the singer of the world far removed from us and of an alien world outlook but a distinctive spokesman of our modern spirit* (emphasis mine—author)."

What, according to Vengerova, is this modernness of Tagore? "*Here am I*," this is the central thought in Tagore which determines his significance for us. 'Our contemporaneity', that is 'Tagore's contemporaneity', expressed in the Oriental form of his hymns, lies precisely in the fact that he broke the bonds of individualism and merged not the world into himself but himself into the world."⁷⁰

If we distract from the usual terminology of the symbolists of that time, we would readily see the correctness of Vengerova's statement. The basis of the humanist views of Tagore garbed in religious form was, indeed, the notion based on Upanishads and Vaishnavite teachings that the highest pervading force lay in man himself. The author of the article continues: "Tagore sees the way of unification with the world and its spiritual essence in love, in the revelations of beauty and chiefly in the 'work of one's life.' *The true temple for Tagore is the 'great gala of the day-to-day life of man'* (emphasis mine—author)."⁷¹

But we are to say that from these, on the whole correct, positions, Vengerova came to the rather unexpected conclusion that Tagore "most closely reminded us of Maeterlinck and the best symbolists of our or the most recent times."⁷² But Tagore's symbolism sometimes had merely a purely outer semblance with Western symbolism and took its shape under the natural influence of centuries-old literary and philosophical tradition of India. Therefore, Vengerova's error was to compare Tagore with Maeterlinck and, in particular, to draw parallel with his [Maeterlinck's] famous literary-philosophical work *The Treasure of the Humble*. There is really nothing in common here. As the Soviet literary critic, V. G. Tan-Bogoraz, later wrote: "Compared with Tagore, Maeterlinck seems so affected, so unreal, and simply tedious and tiresome."⁷³ The question here is not merely of Maeterlinck's affectation. His *Treasure of the Humble* asserted the helplessness of man before fate and

thus had anti-humanist character. It alienates from life whereas Tagore represents acceptance of life, a love of life. This fact the poetess herself admitted when she pointed out that Tagore's work, in its basis, was associated with currents different from world renouncing mysticism coming from the East.

Rightly pointing to the unification of two cultures in Tagore's work, Vengerova affirmed that "for him the truth was not in the aspirations of the will but as seen in the light of his reminiscences... The religious fixedness of the East was a brilliant anti-thesis to the volitional gesture of our Western world, its emotions and reflections in art."⁷⁴ The critic would hardly have written these lines if she were aware of the fact of Tagore's participation in the Swadeshi movement and the contents of his novel *Gora* then almost unknown outside Bengal. (The novel *Gora*, published in Bengali in 1907-1910, was translated into English and then immediately into Russian only in 1924).

It should be said that Vengerova virtually—and this is the most valuable in her work—*disrobed Tagore of the mantle of "patented mystic" and "true theosophist"* which some contemporaries had tried to place on him. "We are," she writes, "prone to see in Tagore's work the revelations of the East to our West, pure and profound spiritualism of the Upanishads... undistorted by utilitarian cult of comforting marvels of modern theosophists."⁷⁵

Further, in her article, she dwelt on his practical work and on the school established by him for the children. Here, she showed with unexpected realism and insight how Tagore lived in conditions of colonial reality :

When his European friends glorified in him the height of his mystical thoughts, he, with his ever characteristic irony, stopped them by saying : 'For the political intelligence in India, I am simply a 'suspect' under No. so and so in police records.'...

*His political views were dangerous; the author of 'Gitanjali' was in life a school teacher influencing the rising youth in a direction, perhaps not at all congenial for the then ruling powers (emphasis mine—author).*⁷⁶

This part of Vengerova's article is the most striking. It is surprising how well informed Vengerova was on Tagore and

on the then political situation in India. How far away is Vengerova's view from the impression that Tagore was only a mystic! This again proves without any doubt that pre-Revolution Russia did know real Tagore.

Besides a general survey of the work and views of Tagore and some important biographical data, this article gives a critical analysis of Tagore's individual writings.

Speaking of *Gitanjali*, she wrote that the "main mood of the book was spiritualistic", and that the "aspirations of the poet were purely religious."⁷⁷ While this analysis of Tagore's anthology of poems has nothing generally new, the review of the plays contains thoughts which have not lost their significance to this day :

Of the three plays available to us in translation, *Chitra* (*Chitrangada*) is a drama of highest meaning of love, revealed by the path of ascent from beauty to truth. The two others (*The Post Office* and *The King of the Dark Chamber*) embody Tagore's religious comprehension of the world in a 'symbolic act'.⁷⁸

The critic believes that the image of the sick child (in *The Post Office*) personifies "the cosmic feelings of the soul in all the purity of its joys and its yearnings towards the invisible."⁷⁹ And the "mutual relations of the world and the eternal source embodying its spirit form the basis of the *King of the Dark Chamber*."⁸⁰ Vengerova considers these dramas one of the most beautiful specimens of 'true symbolism' in modern literature.⁸¹

Vengerova's article is the culmination of the vast literature on Tagore published in Russia till that time. Despite some controversial conclusions, in its depth and extent, it is in no way inferior to any such thing published in the West during this time.

A little earlier than Vengerova, the known Belorussian poet, M. Bogdanovich (1914) gave a rather more true estimate of Tagore's symbolism (*Gitanjali*) :

As regards the contents of the poems, these are almost always symbolic. But these symbols are not of the nature of a rebus [riddle], the solving of which may only irritate readers. *Tagore's symbolism, on the other hand, is*

*realistic, embodied with flesh and blood, and always has some real, concrete meaning and relevance to day-to-day life (emphasis mine—author)."*⁸²

Well, here again is realism, no mysticism!

All these prefaces and introductions to Russian translations of Tagore and the articles on him hitherto analysed have been largely by authors who were able to see real India and not any distorted image thereof, and thus assess Tagore in right perspective. But this does not, of course, at all mean that Tagore was always correctly understood in these years before the Revolution.

There was, as we already noted, another trend whose representatives were deeply fascinated by rather fantastic notions of the so-called Indian wisdom. These so to say fashionable currents of early 20th century tried to make Tagore their "banner." They labelled Tagore a patented mystic or referred to him as a true theosophist while his works had nothing to do with theosophy.

In 1914, for example, Baudouin de Courtenay, living in St. Petersburg, published an extensive article in the journal "Vestnik Znaniya" [Herald of Knowledge]. In this article, the author drew parallels between the works of Tagore and those of all possible European poets. "The original, exotic lyric poetry of Tagore, howsoever distinctive, makes us recall Maeterlinck, Verhaeren and French neo-idealists Romain Rolland, F. James etc...." [We interrupt the quotation here because we can make out nothing from this list of assorted names]. Courtenay's further remarks have a dense fog of mysticism:

The [songs of] *Gitanjali* (though apparently, sometimes, winter notes also sound in them) are essentially just a mystic figuration, converging into one silvery harmony of the skies, into the mysterious psalm of the traveller of the endless path...

Besides the thoughts and moods common to all mankind, this inheritor of that most ancient culture, from which originate many roots of culture of our tribe too, gives us something specially precious, flowing from his native centuries-old tradition, gives us the immortal beauty of the Indian soul eternally pining for the ideal and thus

not satisfied with the confines of the apparent imperfect world.

The over-all mystic nature of the lofty songs, of course, brings the new Indian poet close to the mystics of various ages and lands, both the effectual and the reflective types ; but the force of the ethical gust, and the bard's yearning for the supreme inner beauty of man, makes his poetry specially interesting and valuable exactly now when so many mighty European writers are in their thoughts absorbed in the revival of moral values of mankind.⁸³

The flight of fantasy has taken Baudouin de Courtenay so far from true Tagore that it is very difficult to grasp anything of Tagore in him. He seems specially happy to go on calling Tagore a mystic.

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Finally, we come to what the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Theosophical Society, P.I. Timofeevsky, says of Tagore though what he has written, we feel, has nothing of Tagore's philosophy.

As stated earlier, in 1914 were published two different translations of Tagore's religious and philosophical lectures, *Sadhana*,—one of these with a foreword by P.I. Timofeevsky.

The publication of *Sadhana*, with the aforesaid foreword by P.I. Timofeevsky, gave a further impetus to the attempts being made in some circles to associate Tagore's name with the theosophical movement. But, actually, this collection of lectures was an exposition, by Tagore, of his views on some ideas of ancient Indian philosophy and, above all, of the teachings of the Upanishads. Though, in the Preface to *Sadhana*, Tagore asserts that the subject matter of the papers . . . has not been philosophically treated, nor has it been approached from the scholar's point of view, he does, as the well-known Soviet Indologist Dr. A.D. Litman notes, "from the very first pages, pose and solve what is nothing but the main problem of philosophy, viz. the problem of relation of thought to life, and spirit to nature. Striving to avoid philosophical definitions, he clothes his ideas in magnificent emotional-artistic garb, though the ideas thereby do not shed off their deeply philosophical content."⁸⁴

How does P.I. Timofeevsky view this book? He writes :

The first principal note of this book [*Sadhana*] is the idea of deep unity of all being...As in all cosmogonies of the world, the One, before becoming the Many, becomes Dual. The recognition of this primary dual nature of the cosmos—true and illusory, real and unreal—is the second principal note of the book. The idea of the dual character of man, of his simultaneous finiteness and infiniteness, sounds all along in author's words.⁸⁵

P.I. Timofeevsky points out two more traits of Tagore's world outlook :

Art in action, life as creative work, life as free manifestation of all its essence,—this is the third principal note of Tagore's outlook". And "Confluence with the Brahma",—this is the fourth principal note. The Lord is here, alongside us.⁸⁶

What did Timofeevsky arrive at? At something totally unexpected by an attentive reader of Tagore's lectures. In his preface to *Sadhana* Tagore says quite unambiguously :

To me the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of the Buddha have even been things of the past, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them both in my own life and in my preaching.⁸⁷

But this is how Timofeevsky concludes his preface :

How should one nevertheless call the system expounded by Tagore?...Although the book is full of quotations from the Upanishads, it is, of course, *far from Brahmanism* (emphasis mine — author) in the same way as it is from the Russian orthodox church... This is theosophy in the highest, in the most sacred sense of this word.⁸⁸

Comment hardly needed. We see that Timofeevsky's attempt has been to associate Tagore with his own camp and declare him a 'true theosophist'.

One cannot but readily see that, despite some attempts to distort, *pre-Revolution Russia, on the whole, did know true Tagore*. But a few eminent scholars (even those who have been engaged in Bengali studies), while giving a very scholarly and exhaustive review of Soviet Indology, make one-

sided and sometimes even wrong assessment of Tagore in pre-Revolution Russia. For instance, the Soviet Orientalist, Academician A.P. Barannikov,⁸⁹ known for his intensive and extensive work on Hindi studies (but not adequately familiar with Bengali literature) wrote :

Tagore's poems enjoyed wide popularity both in pre-Revolution Russia and in Europe. In these the reader found the *traditional exotic atmosphere* (emphasis mine—author) so alluring to those who sought elements of romanticism and mysticism in poetry.⁹⁰

Is this so, indeed? We have already amply discussed such arbitrary comments.

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Another Soviet scholar, Vera Novikova, a pupil, among others, of Academician A. P. Barannikov, well known for her studies on Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, also, for the first time, documented valuable facts on Tagore studies in her paper on "Rabindranath Tagore in Russia"⁹¹ published at the time of Tagore birth centenary celebrations in the Soviet Union. While her review of the Soviet period of Tagore studies is interesting and thorough, her lopsided assessments of the facts for the period 1913-1917 undermine the good work of the pioneers.

Vera Novikova is no doubt mistaken in thinking that the Russian "decadent" translators "selected for translation mainly those lyrical and dramatic works of Tagore which,, in their view, reflected, with the greatest force, the religious and mystical moods of the Indian poet and in which the association with real life, with concrete historical reality was least felt."⁹²

After all that has been earlier stated in this chapter, one should have no difficulty in readily seeing how wrong such an assertion is. Besides, what works of Tagore were to be translated was decided by the translators or publisher (Macmillan) in England and United States. The Russian translators simply had to translate these into Russian as, in Russia, the study of Bengali started only after the Revolution. Moreover, the Russian publisher Portugalov was able to find nice selections from India.

The translators, in most cases, did their work with consummate skill. Some of them displayed amazingly high artistic level — for example, those made by M.A. Pusheshnikov, under

the able editorship of Ivan Bunin. These, even half a century later, have been included⁹³ in the centenary edition of Tagore's Works in Russian (1961-1965).⁹⁴

Vera Novikova has also not been right in comparing the translations made earlier from English with those subsequently made direct from Bengali. These just cannot be expected to tally, because Tagore, we know, himself revised the text of many of his writings later.⁹⁵

Though the scholar tries to affirm that both the West European and Russian "decadent" translators and critics have had one-sided and pre-conceived approach to the work of Tagore, and tries to search in him what he [Tagore] himself didn't accept—renunciation of life, and concentration on one's "I",⁹⁶ it is curious that she at the same time cites quotations which are at variance with this view.

Another Soviet scholar, L. S. Gamayunov, to whom goes the credit of publishing a collection of valuable documents on Tagore,⁹⁷ also wrote an extensive work on the subject of Tagore and Russia⁹⁸ containing many new facts, specially on the Soviet period. Resting chiefly on Academician Barannikov's views, his approach to assessment of Tagore in Russia before the Revolution is, we feel, more erroneous. He writes : "*Pre-Revolution Russia did not know true Tagore*" (emphasis mine — author). Is it true indeed ?

Strangely enough, he is unable to see the independence of the Russian studies and believes that these simply reproduce what was published in England or America.⁹⁹ After the survey and analysis of such writings already made in this chapter, we need hardly say anything more to contest this view of Gamayunov. (The only Prefaces reproduced in Russia were those of W.B. Yeats and Rajani Ranjan Sen).¹⁰⁰

Further, Gamayunov has been reiterating,—wrongly, of course,—that the religious-mystic treatment of Tagore's work has been the most prevalent. In his view, Tagore's poetry personifies a new, hitherto unknown form of mystical perception of life. He sees accents of mysticism¹⁰¹ even in Vengerova's assessments.¹⁰² He also, all of a sudden, states that Tagore himself did not claim realistic perception of actual life ; and called Indian reality a pageant, and his job was to sing inspiredly at this festival(?!)¹⁰³

L. S. Gamayunov concludes that Tagore was of interest only to the Russian intelligentsia passing through a state of deep ideological confusion. He writes : "The aesthete Russian intelligentsia sought in Tagore's work what suited their moods of the time, sought refuge from the anxieties of the world, from the upheavals of revolutionary environment, sought something transcendental and mystic."¹⁰⁴ From what is stated above this too does not correspond to reality. In fact, we must stress with all the emphasis that Tagore had become the favourite of one and all (least of all, of the decadents and theosophists, as a few critics like Gamayunov have sometimes been trying to make out). Tagore's books were there in the personal library of V. I. Lenin¹⁰⁵ and in the collections of Lunacharsky, Maksim Gorky,¹⁰⁶ and many, many others.

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Tagore, for instance, impressed Valerii Bryusov, one of the famous symbolist poets and later a communist, who even wrote an *Imitation of Rabindranath Tagore* :

When I bring you toys, my child,
I understand why so pearl-like are the clouds,
And why so lovingly does the South Wind fondle
the flowers,—

When I bring you toys, my child.
When I give sweets in your hand, my child,
I understand why the flower is filled with pollen,
And why the fruits so sugary under our skies,
When I give sweets in your hand, my child.
When I kiss you in your little eye, my child,
I understand why the sky is so clear in the morning,
And why the wind so fresh over the silvery palm,
When I kiss you in your little eye, my child.¹⁰⁷

Other eminent leaders of culture in Russia, enamoured of Tagore at that time, included the great theatre director and actor Konstantin Stanislavsky and no less celebrated artist-thinker Nikolai Roerich (1874-1947).

Stanislavsky's was not merely a casual interest in Tagore. He lent full support to the idea of staging Tagore's *King of the Dark Chamber* as mooted by another distinguished stage director and actor of that time, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko.¹⁰⁸ Comparing Tagore's art with that of Aeschylus, the great

dramatist of ancient Greece, Stanislavsky told his colleagues on 11 August 1916 :

Rabindranath ; Aeschylus—well, that's the real thing.

This we cannot play but must attempt.¹⁰⁹

Towards the end of August 1916 Stanislavsky wrote to his daughter : "Intensive work is going on here on ten plays, [including] on Rabindranath's *King of the Dark Chamber*."¹¹⁰

The distinguished Lithuanian and Russian poet, Yu. N. Baltrushaitis, the translator of Tagore's *Gitanjali* and *Gardener* into Russian, was requested by the Moscow Art Theatre to make special translations of Tagore's plays *Post Office* and *Chitra*—obviously, there was a proposal to work later also on these plays.¹¹¹

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As we saw earlier, the books of Tagore left on Nikolai Roerich a deep and diverse impression which found the most lucid expression in the latter's poems published in his famous anthology *Flowers of Morya*.¹¹² Essentially, these were written in the same style, the rhythmic prose, as Tagore himself chose while rendering his poems in English. The works have an affinity even in the system of symbolic images ; Roerich greatly liked the image of the 'Great Preceptor'.¹¹³

Roerich read a lot of Tagore specially in 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, and even himself translated him. The drama *Piety*, written by Roerich in November 1917, ends in the buoyant chord of free rendering of Tagore's poem "Where the Mind is without Fear."¹¹⁴

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It is thus seen how intense and multisided was the fascination of the Russian society for Tagore and what great endeavours had been put in to popularise Tagore in Russia and to understand him in right earnest during these four to five years before the Revolution.

We also considered it most imperative to rectify the erroneous estimates of studies of Tagore in Russia before the Revolution, which had been undermining the great attainments of Russian Indology and of Russian thought we talked of in our first chapter.

We must also stress that this voluminous work was the firm plinth on which the structure of Tagore studies in the Soviet period was raised.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) The very first translation from *Gitanjali* along with its review was, so far as we have been able to establish, published in the newspaper "Russkie Vedomosti" [Russian News] in June 1913 by the Russian writer, journalist and London correspondent of this paper, I. V. Shklovsky (Dioneo). See "U grudi blagoi prirody" [In the Lap of the Noble Nature],—"Russkie Vedomosti", M. 1913. 6 June. [BI, p. 469].

A little later, the same year, Shklovsky published the first Russian translation (first also in the West, in general) of Tagore's story *Vicharaka* [The Judge], taken obviously from an Indian edition, because till that time no English translations of Tagore's stories had been published in the West. [See also note 10]. Along with the story, Shklovsky reprinted his translation from *Gitanjali* with his introductory article. see "Slovo" [The Words], Sb. 1, M., 1913, pp. 127-49.—*Iz Rabindranata Tagora. Sud'ya. Pesni iz sbornika Gitanjali. Per. i predisl. Dioneo.* [From R. Tagore. *Judge. Songs from Gitanjali.*—and foreword by Dioneo].

Excerpts from *Gitanjali* were also translated and published in journals "Ogonek" [Spark] (St. Pbg., 1913, no. 45, p. 14—R. Tagor *Iz zhertvoprinosheniya tsvetami. Per. s. L'vovskogo*) and "Zavety" [Behests]. (St. Pbg., 1913, no. 11 pp. 116-120—R. Tagor. *Gitanjali (Zher-tvennye pesni).* Per. Yu. Baltrushaitis).

In October-November 1913, the St. Petersburg journal "Severnye Zapiski" [Notes from the North], published the first complete translation of *Gitanjali* made by A. P. Khavkina, with a preface (see note 20 *infra*).

The history of publication of the first translations of Tagore in the West, from which those in Russian were made, is remarkable. It is a known fact that at the time of ill health before his third visit to the West in 1912, Tagore himself made an English translation of select poems from some of his Bengali books, and called them *Gitanjali*, that is, by the title of his last Bengali collection of poems.

Even till this day, the Bengali collection *Gitanjali* is sometimes confused with the English, which had only a part of the poems from the Bengali version of the same name. Besides, Tagore had revised some of these poems for his English version.

While going to Europe, Tagore took these translations with him. We shall mention here the dramatic happening which so accidentally introduced to the world the greatest poet of modern India. On arriving in London, the copy-book containing the translations was left by mistake in the London metro and was retrieved only the next day in the "lost goods section." (See Rathindra-nath Tagore : *On the Edges of Time*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 114).

The artist V. Rothenstein, whom Tagore had come to know in Calcutta already in 1910, gave the translations to the Irish poet W. B. Yeats. Yeats was amazed by the beauty of Tagore's poems. The poems were read at a session on 30 June 1912, and then published in a limited edition of 750 copies, of which only a few became available for sale—R. Tagore : *Gitanjali ; Song Offerings ; a collection of prose translations made by the author from original Bengali*. With an introduction by W. B. Yeats. Lnd., 1912. Printed by the India Society, xvi, 64 p.

Thereafter, the well-known London publisher Macmillan and Co. published this book in March, 1913, for the broader market. It had an unprecedented success, and in 1913 alone it was reprinted 13(!) times. The first Russian translation was made from this English edition—almost at once, in the same viz. in 1913. It should be mentioned that the Macmillan publishers virtually enjoyed monopoly of the right to publish, and one might say, to select Tagore's works for translation into English.

On 13 October 1912 Tagore visits USA where he gives talks on Indian philosophy, published by Macmillan in 1913 under the title *Sadhana*. This book was also at once translated into Russian. (See note 23 *infra*). In USA, the Chicago journal "Poetry" published English translation of some poems of Tagore—

the first poetry translations in the West. Tagore's prose, as we noted, was translated and published in the West only 3-4 years later.

- (2) Tagore's creative work had behind it a tradition of many centuries, marked by richness and diversity. The origins of Bengali literature are generally placed in the 10th century, and go back to *Carya*, a collection of hymns of Buddhist origin. The mediaeval Bengali poetry found its best expression in the poets of Bhakti cult, Chandidas and Vidyapati (15th century), in *Chandimangal* of Mukundadam Chakravarti (16th century, also known as Kavi Kankan), in the songs of Ramprasad Sen (1720-1755) and in *Vidyasundar* a poem most perfect in form, by Bharat Chandra Roy (1707-1766), whom, as we earlier mentioned, G. Lebedev read and partly translated.

In the 19th century modern Bengali literature had stupendous development. Poetry, while continuing the traditions of the highest poetic skill of the last century, mastered new forms and used the traditional ones in a new way. The most eminent Bengali poet of the 19th century, Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-1873) was real innovator, inspiring Tagore when he broke up with traditions and created new forms for Bengali literature. Tagore was greatly influenced by the romantic poets, Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya (1833-1903), specially by his patriotic and satirical poems, Nabinchandra Sen (1847-1909), the author of historical poems, and a specially subtle lyricist, Biharilal Chakravarty (1835-1894). The Bengali drama also made great progress. A social play to become immensely popular was *Nil Darpan* [lit. : Indigo Mirror, 1860] of Dinabandhu Mitra (1829-1873), openly revealing the impudent, inhuman autocracy of the British planters and the slavish downtroddenness of peasants, and anonymously translated into English by M. M. Datta. The play so frightened the colonial administration that the publisher of the translation, the enlightened missionary, James Long, was fined 1,000 Rupees and sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

On the scene also appears literary prose which, as is

known, was not there before the 19th century. Great contribution to the development of prose was made by the enlighteners Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswarachandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), and the distinguished 19th century prose writer, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894), the pioneer of the genre of modern novel in Bengali literature. Without all this base, Tagore would not have been able to bring about a real revolution in Bengali prose language, create new genres, above all that of the short story, and affirm critical realism in Bengali literature. These concise remarks do not, in any way, claim to be intensive or extensive ; they are intended only to show to those not familiar with the history of Bengali literature how great was the base of the literary phenomenon, Tagore—the culmination of many centuries of literary tradition and, besides, the peak of that literary process which has come to be called the Bengali renaissance.

- (3) Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Discovery of India*, precisely formulates these two trends of Indian thought—"tradition of accepting life in its fullness"; and "the ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism", comparing them with the Tagore and Gandhi phenomena. He correctly writes that "Tagore and Gandhi have undoubtedly been the outstanding and dominating figures of India in this first half of the twentieth century" (See J. Nehru : (*The*) *Discovery of India*, NY, 1946, pp. 342-343), considering that Tagore most clearly expresses the trend of renunciation of asceticism. We shall be quoting Nehru's full statement in the next chapter in the context of similar comparisons of Gandhiji and Tagore made by Soviet literary scholars, writers and the first People's Commissar of Education, A. V. Lunacharsky. Nehru gives a most concise characterisation of Tagore (his actual words are even used for titles of articles) when he says that "Tagore was the great humanist of India" (*ibid.*, p. 347).
- (4) It is a known fact that asceticism was glorified in many masterpieces of ancient Indian literature, specially Buddhist. Therefore, those not familiar with the two trends of Indian thought regarded it as an integral part

of Indian philosophy. Because of this, too, therefore, Tagore's work, demonstrating that the highest spirituality can, to use J. Nehru's expression, be combined with "acceptance of life in the fullness", without standing in need of asceticism, was a true revelation to many; and, this, in a considerable measure predetermined Tagore's success amongst readers "tired" of sermons of asceticism.

- (5) R. Tagore : *Gitanjali*, Lnd., 1956, p. 28.
- (6) K. Paustovsky : *Collected Works* [in Russian], vol. 3, M., 1958, p. 325.
- (7) Tolstoy died on 7(20) November 1910 at the Ostapovo, now Leo Tolstoy Station (in R.S.F.S.R.).
Nikolai Roerich had an immense admiration and devotion for Tolstoy. He wrote to Rabindranath Tagore in his letter of 11 February, 1937 : "For me, the greatest, as a symbol of our land Russia, is Tolstoy."
- (8) Jurgiz K. Baltrushaitis (1873-1944), Lithuanian and Russian poet ; Ambassador of Lithuania to USSR from 1921 to 1939. His published works include the collections of poems *Earthy Steps* (1911) and *Mountain Path* (1911), mostly philosophical lyrics, having individualistic motifs. These had been written just before he started translating Tagore.
- (9) Nikolai Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo naslediya* [From the Literary Heritage], M., 1974, pp. 110-2.
- (10) Till 1912 Tagore was not known in the West and in Russia although his first writings were published in Calcutta in Bengali as far back as in 1875 (according to some data, even in 1873) By 1912 Tagore had acquired, in his country, the reputation of a major writer of the leading Bengali literature in India. Over 100 of his books of poems, songs, stories, novels, numerous articles on most diverse subjects, ranging from philosophical essays and critical literary reviews to remarks on current political themes, had already been published by this time. His works inspired the writers of other Indian literatures—for example, Premchand, outstanding Hindi and Urdu prose writer, the creator of the genre of short story in Hindi literature, started his literary career with translations of Tagore's stories, and, in 1907, published an anthology which was confiscated and burnt

by the colonial powers (a copy of this publication was found in India in the 50's and introduced to the academic world by the eminent literary critic and scholar from Leningrad, V. Balin). Tagore also was not considered safe; and, as the eminent modern Bengali scholar, Chinmohan Sehanavis, writes in his book *Rabindranath o biplabi samaj* [Rabindranath and the Revolutionary Society] (Calcutta, 1985, p. 18), he was then under the censor of the colonial secret police,—a fact, also noted as early as in 1915 by the Russian poetess, Z. Vengerova (see *infra*).

So, it was not merely the language barrier that kept Tagore away. The first English translations of his stories were,—as recently established by the young Bengali scholar, Samir Roy Choudhury (whom the author met recently at Santiniketan),—published towards the end of 1901 in the paper "New India" brought out by the well-known Indian revolutionary publicist, Bipin Chandra Pal. The first such story published was *Vicharaka* (The Judge)—See Roy Choudhury's article in "Aajkal" of 18 December 1984.

This information is specially relevant to our subject for, as we have seen, this precisely was the story, which, along with fragments from *Gitanjali*, translated by Shklovsky, was destined to be the first translation of Tagore into Russian. It goes to the credit of Shklovsky that he was able to lay his hands upon it.

Here we should say that in 1900, Tagore's friend, the great Indian scientist, J. C. Bose (more details later), tried in vain to have the translation of one of Tagore's best stories, *Cabuliwalla*, published in the "Harper's Magazine." As Patrice Gedy, the English biographer of J. C. Bose, mentions in his book, *The Life and Works of Jagdish Chandra Bose* (1920), J. C. Bose made these futile attempts after he had read out this story to the Russian revolutionary and publicist, P. Kropotkin, whom he knew, and received his enthusiastic applause. Kropotkin said that the story made him recall the best works of Russian classical writers, Gedy states in his book that the Western publishers "were not interested in the life of the modern East."

Later, the paper "New India" published a few more stories of Tagore. S. Roy Choudhury believes that Bipin Chandra Pal was not only the first publisher but also the first translator of Tagore's stories (names of translators are not given in the paper). In any case Bipin Chandra Pal's contribution here is beyond doubt.

S. Roy Choudhury has rectified the error of the most distinguished bibliographers and specialists on Tagore—Pulin Behari Sen and Sudhimoy Mukhopadhyaya—that the first English translations made in India of Tagore's writings were published only from December 1909 onwards in the prestigious Calcutta journal "The Modern Review", edited by the well-known publisher and publicist Ramananda Chatterjee, the close friend of Tagore. It may be recalled here that in the 30's it was he who started publishing the translation of Tagore's *Letters from Russia*,—which scared the colonial powers (we shall talk of this in detail in a subsequent chapter).

For the present, we shall mention that S. Roy Choudhury also helped us to find out the source of the first Russian translations of Tagore's stories.

What a pity that, like Dilip Kumar Roy who sent to Leo Tolstoy, through his friend, the first book of Swami Vivekananda in English, neither Ramananda Chatterjee nor Bipin Chandra Pal thought of sending to Tolstoy the first English translations of Tagore. Tolstoy was still alive !

- (11) This page of Roerich's "Pages from My Diary" was written in 1917.
- (12) A. E. Gruzinsky : *Rabindranath Tagore*. 'Foreword' in the book *Rabindranath Tagor. Perevod v stikhakh A. E. Gruzinskogo* [Rabindranath Tagore. Translated into verse by A. E. Gruzinsky], M., Gran', 1918. pp. 3-19.
- (13) A. F. Hilferding : *Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo industani (Urdu)* [Hindustani (Urdu) Practical Manual]. St. Pbg., 1899 ; *Grammatika industani (Urdu), industanskii sobesednik i russko-industani-angliiskii slovar' v russkoi transkriptsii* [Hindustani (Urdu) Grammar, Hindustani Conversation Phrase-Book, and Russian-Hindustani-English Dictionary in Russian Transcription]. St. Pbg., 1899 ; *Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo k izucheniyu pocherkd*

shikesta... [Practical Manual on the Study of Shikest Writing...], St. Pbg., 1900.

This is the very same Hilferding who wrote "On the Relationship of the Slavonic Languages to Sanskrit" [See Chapter I].

- (14) A. P. Barannikov : *Indiiskaya filologiya. Literaturovedenie* [Indian Philology. Study of Literature], M., 1959, p. 284.
- (15) Roerich : *op. cit.*
- (16) Specially enamoured of Tagore were, for example, the distinguished symbolist poet, Valerii Bryusov, the famous theatre director, actor and producer, Konstantin Stanislavsky.
- (17) One of these published (1914-1915) by Valentin Portugalov was supposed to be in ten volumes, but actually only 8 volumes (vols. 1-7 ; 10) could be brought out. These volumes included all that was by this time published of Tagore in the West—*Gitanjali* (vol. 1) ; *Gardener* (vol. 2) ; *Crescent Moon* (vol. 3) ; *Chitra/Chitrangada* (vol. 4) ; *The Post Office* (vol. 5) ; *The King of the Dark Chamber* (vol. 6) ; *Sadhana* (vol. 10) ; and, besides, what was published not at all in the West but only in India ; that is *Glimpses of Bengal Life : Collected Short Stories* (vol. 7).

Vol. 8, supposed to contain the novel *Eyesore* (also only published in India, in the "Modern Review") was announced for publication, but did not actually come out.

The volumes were published with good aesthetic sense, with illustrations, for example, in the *Crescent Moon*, made by Abanindranath Tagore. In the West, such Collected Works in English never appeared and in India—only in Bengali.

The other Collection of Works was published (1914-16) by the publishing house "Sovremennye problemy" (Problems of Today) in six volumes—*Gitanjali* (vol. 1) ; *Sadhana* (vol. 2) ; *The Gardener* (vol. 3) ; *The King of the Dark Chamber* and *The Post Office* (vol. 4) ; *The Crescent Moon* (vol. 5) ; and *Kabir's Poems* (Tr. by B. Vasin, with a preface by E. E., 1916) which had been just published in the West (vol. 6).

Some of the volumes were also reprinted within a year.

- (18) See notes 20-25 *infra*. Particular mention may be made of *Gitanjali* and *Gardener*, tr. by Pusheshnikov, under the editorship of Ivan Bunin, reprinted four times (!) by the Moscow Writers' Publishing House.
- (19) Very many separate poems or other individual pieces were published on the pages of periodicals. For example, *From Gitanjali. Song Offerings* ["Niva", St. Pbg., 1914, no. 2, pp. 36-7]; *Gitanjali. Songs offered* ["Vestnik teosofii" (Bulletin of Theosophy), Pbg., 1914, no. 1, pp. 71-82; no. 2, pp. 42:50; no. 3, pp. 49-53]; *Fragments from the Gardener* ["Byulleten' Literaturny i zhizni" (Bulletin of Literature and Life), M., 1914, no. 20, pp. 1154-60]; *Gardener* (Fragments) ["Sovremennik" (The Contemporary), Pg., 1914, no. 13-15, pp. 18-31]; *Geroi* (Hero), from the *Crescent Moon* ["Yunaya Rossiya (The Young Russia), M., 1914, Dec. pp. 1464-1466]; *Astronom* (Astronomer) ["Yunaya Rossiya" (Young Russia), M., 1915, Jan., p. 90]; *Chitra*, a lyrical drama in one act ["Sovremennik", Pg., 1915, no. 2, pp. 25-41]; *The King of Dark Chamber* ["Severnye zapiski", Pg. 1915, July-Aug. pp. 5-54]. And many others. Some of these translations are even not yet included in the most complete bibliographies of Tagore.
- (20) (i) *Gitanjali. Pesennye zhertvoprinosheniya* [Song Offerings], tr. with a preface by L. V. Khavkina—"Severnye zapiski" [Notes from the North], St Pbg., 1913, Oct. pp. 87-101 ; Nov., pp. 100-120.
- (ii) *Gitanjali. Zhertvennye pesnopeniya* [Songs Offered], tr. with a preface by N. A. Pusheshnikov, under the ed. of I. A. Bunin. M., Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelei, 1914. vii, 53 p.
2nd ed. : 1914
3rd ed. : 1916
- (iii) *Zhertvopesni. (Gitanjali)* [Song Offerings (Gitanjali)]. Tr. under the ed. of Yu. Baltrushaitis—in R. Tagore : *Collected Works* (in Russian), bk, 1, M., Sovremennye problemy, 1914, [also M., Portugalov, 1914. Reprinted 1915].
2nd ed. : 1916

- (iv) *Prinosheniya v pesnyakh* [Offerings in Songs], tr. by A. S. under the ed. of A. Sludsky. Kushnerov, 1914. ix, 105 p.
- (v) *Gitangale. Pesni, prinosimye v dar* [Gitanjali. Songs Gifted]. Tr. by S. Tatarinova. Pbg., Vestnik teosofii [Bulletin of Theosophy], 1914, 47 p.
Also printed under the title *Gigangali*.
- (vi) *Zhertvopesni* [Gitanjali]. Offered Songs Rendered by A. D. Runovskaya. Kursk, tip. Libermana [Lieberman Printing House], 1915. 50 p.
- (21) (i) *Sadovnik*. [Gardener]. Tr. by N. A. Pusheshnikov, under the ed. of I. A. Bunin. M., Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelei (Writers' Publishing House). [1914], 63 p.
- (ii) *Sadovnik. Lirika lyubvi i zhizni* [Gardener. Lyrics of Love and Life], tr. from English with a Preface by V. G. Tardov. M., Portugalov, 1914. Reprinted 1915.
- (iii) *Lirika lyubvi i zhizni (Sadovnik)* [Lyrics of Love and Life (*The Gardener*)], tr. from English by V. Spasskaya. M., Sovremennye problemy [Problems of Today], 1915. 2nd ed. : 1916.
- (iv) *Sadovnik* [Gardener]. Tr. by E. I. Saishnikova. M., Universal'naya biblioteka [Universal Library]; 1917.
2nd ed. : 1917
- (22) (i) *Lunnyi serp* [Crescent Moon], tr. by M. Likiardopulo. M., Portugalov, 1914. Reprinted 1915.
- (ii) *Vozrozhdayushchayasya luna (Lunnyi serp)*.—[The Rising Moon (*Crescent Moon*)], tr. by B. Vasin, Moscow, Sovremennye problemy [Problems of Today], 1916.
- (iii) *Narozhdayushchiysya mesyats*. [Rising Moon], tr. from English by S. Tatarinova.—“Vestnik teosofii [Bulletin of Theosophy], 1915, no. 1, pp. 70-5 ; no. 2 ; pp. 43-50 ; no. 3, pp. 53-62 ; no. 4, pp. 31-6.
- (23) (i) *Sadhana. Postizhenie zhizni* [Sadhana. Understanding Life], tr. from English by V. Pogossky, M., Portugalov, 1914. Reprinted 1915.

- (ii) *Tvorchestvo zhizni (Sadhana)* [Life's Work (*Sadhana*)], tr. from English by A. F. Gretman and V. S. Lempitsky. Foreword by P. I. Timofeevsky and author. Moscow, *Sovremennye problemy* [Problems of Today], 1914.
2nd ed. : 1916
- (24) (i) *Chitra/Chitrangada. Dramaticheskaya poema.* [*Chitra*; a drama in verse], tr. from English by Podgorichani, M., Portugalov, 1915.
- (ii) *Chitra/Chitrangada*, tr. from English by V. Spasskaya. Moscow, *Sovremennye problemy* [Problems of Today], 1915.
2nd ed. : 1916
- (25) (i) *Tsar' temnogo pokoya* [The King of the Dark Chamber], tr. from English by Z. Vengerova & V. Spasskaya. M., *Sovremennye problemy* [Problems of Today], 1915.
- (ii) *Tsar' temnogo chertoga. Misticheskaya drama* [The King of the Dark Chamber; a mystic drama], tr. from English by Lepkovsky and M. Rodon, Moscow, Portugalov, 1915.
- (26) (i) *Pochta; p'esa* [*The Post Office*; a play], tr. from English by M. Rodon. Foreword by W. B. Yeats, M., Portugalov, 1915.
- (ii) *Pochtovaya kontora* [*The Post Office*]. Tr. from English by Z. Vengerova and V. Spasskaya. Foreword by Z. Vengevova, M., *Sovremennye problemy* [Problems of Today], 1915
- (27) *Iz zhizni Bengalii. Rasskazy* [From Bengal Life. Stories], tr. by A. I. & A. F. Sludsky. M., Portugalov, 1915.
- (28) *Glimpses of Bengal life*; being short stories from the Bengali of Rabindranath Tagore, with introduction by Rajani Ranjan Sen, pleader and Law lecturer, Chittagong College, Minto Chittagong. Madras, Natesan publishing, 1913.

Strangely enough, Tagore's friend, Rothenstein, tried to persuade Tagore that the translations of his stories published by Ranjan Sen in *Glimpses of Bengal Life* were "too monstrously ill done", in spite of their success as we know not only in India but in Russia too. Efforts even were made to block Sen's book from circulation.

[Rothenstein's letter of 17 September 1913 to Tagore—*See Imperfect Encounter ; Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore 1911-1941*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Mary M. Lago, Cambridge, Harvard University press, 1972, pp. 122-3].

It may be noted here that new English translations of Tagore's stories as made by C. F. Andrews and others were published by Macmillan, in 1916.

- (29) *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, tr. from the original Bengali by C. F. Andrews and various writers. Lnd., Macmillan, 1916, 271 p. Also NY, 1916.

The Collection *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* had a great success, particularly, in the USA. Tagore's stories were compared with those of Tolstoy and Chekhov. We quote here a few reviews from American press :

"These thirteen tales, translated from the Bengali by various hands, are of various sorts ; but all come close to the realities of Indian life, and the manner of telling all conforms rather surprisingly to our Occidental standards. They are genuine short stories : in one the reader will find passages which remind him faintly of Daudet, in another of Tchekoff [Chekhov], in a third of Hawthorne." (*New York City Eve Post*, 11 Nov. 1916).

"As a writer of stories, Tagore is not easily classified, which is some consolation for those who instinctively object to such undertaking. The most that may be said with any intelligence is that there are suggestions of Tolstoy, Chekov, Hawthorne, Daudet, Gautier and others, but they are merely suggestions of the kind which vary with each reader. A scene, a character, perhaps a word, may recall something in another book, but there is no one story which we can say might have been written by somebody else. Even the term Oriental conveys no meaning, for there is no more fixed Oriental type of story than there is one to be called European." (*San Francisco California Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1916).

- (30) "The Modern Review," January-November 1914.

- (31) See note 17.

- (32) The outstanding Russian literary scholar and critic, B. V. Mikhaisovsky, in his book *Tvorchestvo M. Gorkogo*

i mirovaya literatura [M. Gorky's Literary Works and World Literature, M., 1965] wrote : "One of the most important aspects . . . [of stories] of young Gorky is the image of the beautiful world, the poetic portrayal of beauty of man, and of the environment around him, the intoxication with the joys of life . . . (p. 39). The hero [of M. Gorky], surrounded by hostile environment, feels lonely, and poignantly suffers from the alienation between the high ideal and the 'base' reality . . ." (p. 71).

Placed in the Indian context, this would, to a great extent, be true of early Tagore.

The landscape, the image of nature are, in young Gorky, imbued with deep . . . social, philosophical content . . . (p. 39).

Allegorical landscape, to use Mikhailovsky's term, is quite common in Tagore, and in his stories seems to forestall the impending events.

Some literary critics, also those from Bengal, usually compare Tagore with Chekhov, of course typologically. But, in our view, Tagore is far closer to the rebellious spirit of Gorky. Tagore and Gorky are closer in their mood of inner romantic realism, which is almost completely wanting in Chekhov. Tagore, of course, liked Chekhov, but, in his writings, more frequently alluded to Gorky. For instance, the name of Gorky is directly mentioned in Tagore's story [*Ward*] No. 1 (*Pailla nambar*) and novel *The Last Poem* (*Shesher kavita*).

It would be of interest to note that Tagore published what we would call his first realistic story in 1891, and Gorky in 1892. This, it seems, wasn't just by chance, for, as another literary critic, E. A. Shubin, put it : "Towards the late 19th and early 20th century, in Russia, as well as in many other countries, the genre of short story attracted far greater attention . . . this period of quest of new forms of social life actively pushed the genre of short story to the fore." (E. A. Shubin : *Sovremennyi russkii rasskaz* [Modern Russian Short Story], L. 1974. p. 52).

- (33) It would be more correct to say, as the Soviet writer L. Novichenko ("Indian Literature", Sahitya Akademi, 1961, Tagore Number, p. 43) puts it, that pre-Revolu-

tion Russia knew Tagore more as a poet (partly also because of such a choice of Tagore's writings for translation in the West—), but also, may be lesser, of Tagore's in other genres.

As regards the view that Tagore was "exotic", this was generally expressed by those to whom East meant something exotic and for whom real literature existed only in the West. Tagore's work was, as we saw, after all, embedded in the soil of world literary process and was different from the western literature only because it had its own distinctive national peculiarity and not because there was anything exotic about it.

- (34) For instance, E. P. Thompson, in his study of Tagore, one of the most extensive to be published in the West—*R. Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* (1st ed. : 1926 ; 2nd ed. : 1948)—almost does not deal with stories, though he was greatly appreciative of them. Even in the Indian works much lesser space is given to stories than to the writings in other genres.

The thorough, extensive work of the Soviet Lettish scholar, I. V. Ivbulis, also gives much less space to stories than to other writings.

- (35) In 1891, on his father's insistence, Rabindranath had to take up the management of his father's *zamindari* (estate). This took him from village to village, and thus enabled him to know the life of the people intimately. Impressions of thoughts of those years found reflection in Tagore's numerous stories. As Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya writes in his *Rabindra-jivani* [Life of Rabindranath, vol. 1, p. 228], "Tagore at last saw the world at large with his own eyes, and the shade of the outer world fell on the endless empire of his fantasy, and gave birth to stories... The theme of every story is taken from the writer's own proximity to reality," and that's how the writer was able to fix in them the touching image of rural Bengal with its small joys and great sufferings".
- (36) "Galpa-guchha", vol. 6, no. 2, special Rabindra issue, Calcutta, June 1983.
- (37) Ernest Rhys : *Rabindranath Tagore; a Biographical Study*, Lnd., Macmillan, 1915. pp. 52, 50.

- (38) E. P. Thompson : *Rabindranath Tagore : His Life and Work*, Lnd., 1921, p. 77.
- (39) V. Lesny : *Rabindranath Tagore : His Personality and Work*. Lnd, 1939, He wrote : "Everything is unusually vivid, though in short stories of this kind a writer has to be very economical. The comparison with Kipling is instructive : whereas Kipling, in his Indian tales, emphasized the unusual and remarkable, Tagore's stories depict the everybody, natural course of Indian life. The theme of the stories is usually taken from present-day family life in a town or a Bengali village, which he knew very thoroughly, and at this period observed from close quarters (p. 89) . . . These stories were a revolutionary event in the world of Bengali Literature ; apart from certain lyrical poems they are Tagore's finest work. They act an ornament to Bengali literature and will always remain a rich contribution to world literature" (p. 95).
- (40) Srikumar Bandyopadhyaya : *Bangla upanyaser dhara* [The Current of Bengali Novel], Calcutta, 1965, p. 198.
- (41) Dhurjati Prasad Mukhopadhyaya : *R. Tagore ; A Study*. Calcutta, 1944, p. 114.
- (42) Rabindranath Tagore's letter to Haraprasad Mitra in "Galpa-guchha", special Rabindra issue (See note 36 *supra*).
- (43) All Macmillan publications of Tagore's writings, except *Gitanjali* brought out up to 1915—*Gardener ; Lyrics of Love and Life*, tr. by the author (1913) ; *The Crescent Moon*, tr. by the author (1913) ; *Sadhana* (1913) ; *Chitra*, a play in one act (1914) ; *The King of the Dark Chamber*, tr. by the author (1914) ; *The Post Office*, tr. by D. Mukherjee (1914) ; *Songs of Kabir*, tr. by the author (1915). After this date (that is, 1915) no editions, like the *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916), *Fruit Gathering* (1916) reached Russia, possibly because of the War. These two collections were translated into Russian only in 1925.
- (44) For an exhaustive list of all such translations into languages of the peoples of USSR one would need familiarity with these languages. Such lists in many native languages, have, of course, been compiled in various republics

of the Soviet Union. The *Bibliografia Indii* [Bibliography of India] which has been our valuable source-book mentions only some pre-Revolution publications in periodicals in Georgian, Armenian and some other languages. Another valuable source—Tagore Centenary Bibliography—*Rabindranat Tagor : Bio-bibliograficheskii ukazatel'* [Rabindranath Tagore : Bio-Bibliographical Index], M., 1961, mentions books but not periodical articles in these various languages.

As an example we shall cite some first Georgian translations of Tagore mentioned in BI : R. Tagori : Sagalobelmi (Songs) ; Targm. Germ. S. Shinshiasvilisa [Tr. by S. Shinshiashvili]. 'Klede (the journal Klde in Georgia), Tbilisi, 1914, no. 9, pp. 8-9. Also in Georgian : R. Tagore : Poems—tr. by Robakidze. Sakartvelo (newspaper in Georgian, Tbilisi, 27 May 1915 & 31 May 1915.

- (45) V. Lebedev : *Poet sovremennoi Indii* [Poet of Modern India]—"Priroda i lyudi", 1914, no. 4, pp. 63-4.
- (46) *Cabuliwalla* was written in 1892, published in Tagore's magazine "Sadhana."
- (47) See notes to Letters of Rabindranath Tagore to J. C. Bose (R. Tagore, *Chhinna patra*, vol. vi).
- (48) See note 10.
- (49) A. I. & A. F. Sludsky : *R. Tagor : Iz zhizni Bengali. Rasskazy*. [R. Tagore : Stories from Life of Bengal]. Foreword. M., V. Portugalov, 1915, pp. 5-12.
- (50) See note 10.
- (51) *Subha/Subhashini*, tr. by A. F. Gretman, M., Portugalov, 1914. Reprinted 1915. Also published under the title *Nemaya* [Dumb Girl] in *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, tr. by A. I. and A. F. Sludsky.
- (52) I. V. Dioneo (Shklovsky) : *Iz Rabindranat Tagora* [From Rabindranath Tagore]. Foreword—"Slovo", *sb.* I, 1913, pp. 129-31.
- (53) *Ibid.*
- (54) *Ibid.*
- (55) *Ibid.*
- (56) V. Kranikhfel'd : *Literaturnye otkliki* [Literary Echoes], "Sovremennyi mir", 1914, no. 1, pp. 267-9.

- (57) L. V. Khavkina : *Gitanjali. Foreword*.—"Severnye Zapisi" [Notes from the North], 1913, no. 10. p. 87.
- (58) *Ibid.*
- (59) V. Lebedev. *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- (60) Tagore never liked being called a mystic. When the critics tried to find in him what he himself did not accept, it always annoyed him : "I know," an irritated Tagore once said in his talk to E. Thompson after receiving a letter from one English lady admirer, "she sees mysticism in all that I write." (See Novikova, *op. cit.*, p. 330).
- (61) V. Lebedev : *op. cit.*
- (62) *Ibid.*
- (63) V. G. Tardov : *R. Tagor. Sadovnik* [R. Tagore. *Gardener*]. Preface. 2nd ed. M., V. Portugalov, 1915, pp. v-xvi.
- (64) *Ibid.*
- (65) We shall be referring to Lunacharsky's estimate in detail in the next chapter.
- (66) Z. L'vovsky : *R. Tagor* [R. Tagore].—"Niva", 1914, no. 2 pp. 35-6. The previous issue of the journal "Niva" had published the news of Tagore's winning the Nobel Prize, along with his portrait, and added : The Nobel laureates for the first time include a non-European, an Indian poet ("Niva," 1914, no. 1, p. 18).
- (67) Kadambari Devi committed suicide in 1884. "She was only 25. Nobody knows why she did it. If the secret was known to any one in Tagore family, it also died with them," writes Tagore's biographer, Krishna Kripalani (see K. Kripalani : *Rabindranath Tagore ; a biography*, 2nd ed., Lnd., 1980). This unbearable grief did not leave the poet broken-hearted, rather made him more mature and courageous. We feel, this tragic event is expressed in the finale of Tagore's story *Ghater Katha* [The Landing Staircase].
- (68) *Ibid.*
- (69) Z. Vengerova : *Rabindranat Tagor* [Rabindranath Tagore],—in R. Tagore : I. *Korol' temnogo pokoya*, [The King of the Dark Chamber]. II. *Pochtovaya Kontora* [Post Office], M., "Sov. problemy", 1915, pp. 7-37 ; also in "Sovremennik", 1915, no. 3, pp. 220-36.

- (70) *Ibid.*
- (71) *Ibid.*
- (72) *Ibid.*
- (73) V.G. Tan-Bogoraz: *Novaya Indiya i Rabindranat Tagor* [New India and Rabindranath Tagore], in R. Tagore: *Zhertvoprinoshenie. Otshel'nik* [The Sacrifice. The Ascetic]. Pgd., Mysl', 1922, pp. 5-58.
- (74) Z. Vengerova: *op. cit.*
- (75) *Ibid.*
- (76) *Ibid.* See also photo-copy of the British Intelligence circular dated 27 July, 1909 published in Chinmohan Sehanavis's book on *Rabindranath o biplabi samaj* (Calcutta, 1985), between pages 18 and 19.
- (77) *Ibid.*
- (78) *Ibid.*
- (79) *Ibid.*
- (80) *Ibid.*
- (81) *Ibid.*
- (82) Quoted in V.A. Novikova: *Rabindranat Tagor v russkoi i sovetskoi kritike i perevodakh* [R. Tagore in Russian and Soviet Literary Criticism and Translation], —in *Rabindranat Tagor. K. stoletiyu so dnya rozhdeniya. Sb. statei.* M., 1961, pp. 327-40. (p. 331).
- (83) Boudouin de Courtenay: *Vysokie pesni Gitanjali. Rabindranat Tagor* [Rabindranath Tagore Spiritual Songs. Gitanjali]—"Vestnik Znaniya" "[Herald of Knowledge], 1914, no. 4, pp. 287-91 .
- (84) P.I. Timofeevsky: *R. Tagor. Tvorchestvo zhizni* [R. Tagore: Life's Work]. Preface. M., "Sov. problemy," 1914, pp. v-xx. See also A.D. Litman: *Filosofskie vzglyady Rabindranata Tagora* [R. Tagore's Philosophical Views] in *R. Tagore's Centenary Volume* [in Russian], M., 1961, p. 85-116.
- (85) *Ibid.*
- (86) *Ibid.*
- (87) *Ibid.*
- (88) *Ibid.*
- (89) Academician A.P. Barannikov is mostly known for his translations of Tulsidasa's *Ramacaritmanasa* and Lalluji Lal's *Premsgar*. We should however mention here that

his estimate of Rabindranath Tagore was not always correct.

- (90) A.P. Barannikov : *op cit.* p. 284.
- (91) See note 83.
- (92) V.A. Novikova, *op. cit.*, p. 329.
- (93) These translations of *Gitanjali* and *Gardener*, as made by Pusheshnikov, are included in the last, 12th Volume of Tagore's Collected Works [in Russian], (1965).
- (94) See the 12-Volume Centenary edition, the most complete in the world (except Bengal, of course), M., 1961-1965. These volumes contain translations made from Bengali, from almost all poetical works of Tagore, from *Sandhya Sangit* [Evening Songs] to *Shesh lekha* [Last Poems].
- (95) When Tagore prepared the English versions of *Gitanjali* and other books of his poems, he did not merely translate from his Bengali. His English versions often were like independently composed poems, and thus there seems to be no logic in comparing the Russian translations made from English versions with those made later from Bengali.
- (96) V. Novikova : *op. cit.*, p. 330.
- (97) *Rabindranat Tagor—drug Sovetskogo Soyuza. Sb. dokumentov i materialov* [Rabindranath Tagore, a Friend of the Soviet Union. Collected Documents and Materials]. Ed. by V.A. Vdovin and L.S. Gamayunov. M., IVL, 1962. Hereafter RTF.
- (98) L.S. Gamayunov : *Rabindranat Tagor v russkoi i sovet-skoi pechati* [Rabindranath Tagore in Russian and Soviet Press]—in *Problemy istorii Indii i stran Sred-nego Vostoka*, M., 1972. Besides this work of Gamayunov, and also that of Vera Novikova, used by us for the analysis of the theme of our work, we must also refer to the well arranged work of L.A. Strizhevskaya : *Tvorchestvo Rabindranata Tagora v Rossii i v Sovets-kom Soyuze* [R. Tagore's Works in Russia and in the Soviet Union].—in "Nauchnye doklady vysshei shkoly. Filologicheskie nauki", 1963, no 180-8.

Though Strizhevskaya's work also does not contain correct assessment of Tagore studies in pre-Revolution Russia, it nevertheless does not have such dis-

crepancies as the works of Novikova and especially Gamayunov. We have discussed Gamayunov's work in greater detail because of the much larger mass of facts there in comparison with Strizhevskaya's work. Besides, much of Strizhevskaya's data are reproduced in Gamayunov's work.

- (99) See note no. 43.
- (100) It is a gross mistake to say that the Prefaces of publications in the West were simply reproduced in Russian. The Prefaces and Introductions of the Russian editions, written sometimes even earlier than those in the West, gave in case of Tagore's poems also far more accurate assessments of Tagore's poems than those in the West, which mostly attribute to Tagore some mist of mysticism.
- (101) L.S. Gamayunov : *op. cit.*, p. 258.
- (102) *Ibid.* p. 277.
- (103) *Ibid.* p. 259.
- (104) *Ibid.* p. 260
- (105) See the Catalogues of V.I. Lenin's personal library at Kremlin.
- (106) See the recently published Catalogues of Maksim Gorky's personal library.
- (107) Valerii Bryusov : *Imitation of Rabindranath Tagore*. Tr. from *Razdum'e ob Indii* [Reflections on India], M., Pravda, 1980 (*Biblioteka "Ogonek"*), p. 18. (Tr. Harish C. Gupta's).
- (108) *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo K.S. Stanislavskogo* [Life and Work of K. S. Stanislavsky], vol. iii, M., 1973.
- (109) *Ibid.*
- (110) *Ibid.*
- (111) *Ibid.*

The work on the play *The King of the Dark Chamber* continued for a few years. It was on the repertoire of the Moscow Art Theatre (which was under Stanislavsky's direction for a few seasons). During January-May 1917, this play was rehearsed by Nemirovich-Danchenko himself. Stanislavsky worked on the play even during the difficult years of the civil war. From Stanislavsky's notes dated 17, 22 and 29 January 1919 on the repertoire sheets preserved in the Archives, it is

seen that at that time Stanislavsky worked at his flat with the cast of Tagore's *King of the Dark Chamber*.

- (112) Some of the poems were published in the "Modern Review".
- (113) Attempts to compare Tagore's poetry with Roerich's were made, though sometimes not without controversy, by the Soviet poet, Valentin Sidorov (see, for example, his Preface in the book *Roerich : Flowers of Morya* [in Russian ; M., 1984, pp. 9-11].
- (114) This was first indicated by the Soviet scholar, P. Belikov. He writes : "Roerich's anthology of poems *Flowers of Morya* largely contains poems written during 1916-1918 at Sortavale. In these one readily discerns a semblance with the poems of Rabindranath Tagore. . . . It is enough to compare Tagore's poems with those of Roerich to be convinced of the similarity of their philosophical perception of the world, which can serve as the key to the riddle of their poetic self-expression. The poetic form, images and even the terminology are singularly close to Tagore's. . . ."

(P. Belikov : *Nikolai Rerikh i India* [Nikolai Roerich and India]—*Strany i narody Vostoka* [Countries and Peoples of the East], no. xiv M., Nauka, 1974, p. 215).

CHAPTER
FOUR

NEW RUSSIA AND TAGORE

If India is a land of wonders, then truly Rabindranath Tagore it its greatest and most precious wonder.

A. KAIGORODOV (1919)

After the Great October Socialist Revolution the problems of national-liberation movement in the countries of the East remained uppermost in the mind of V.I. Lenin, of the Soviet government and of the party. This concern is best expressed in the last article (1923) of V.I. Lenin :

In the last analysis the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe and during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.¹

Of the countries of the East V.I. Lenin gave special importance to India. He wrote in 1921 :

The masses of the working people in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe, were roused to political life at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly by the revolutions in Russia, Turkey, Persia and China. The imperialist war of 1914-18 and the Soviet power in Russia are completing the process of converting these masses into an active factor of world politics and in the revolutionary destruction of imperialism... British India is at the head of these countries, and there revolution is maturing in proportion, on the one hand to the growth of the industrial and railway proletariat, and, on the other, to the increase in the brutal terrorism of the British who with ever greater frequency resort to massacres (Amritsar), public floggings etc.²

Realising the significance of study of the contemporary East, V.I. Lenin, in September 1920, signed a decree for establishing in Petrograd and Moscow institutes for study of living Oriental languages.³ These institutes were to be geared for study not

only of languages and literatures but also of the history and contemporary situation of the countries of the East.

The setting up of the institutes, and numerous other measures, laid the foundation of a new Orientology in general and Indology in particular, and raised this study to a considerably high level, markedly different from the Oriental studies in the West. The West mostly continued its same earlier preoccupation with antiquity and took up the study of the modern East in right earnest only after the second world war.

The Petrograd Institute of Modern Oriental Languages, for the first time, started an all-round study of modern Indian languages and literatures, including, of course, Bengali as being one of the most developed and advanced in India.

Thus, the October Revolution restored the link of the study of modern India started by Gerasim Lebedev but disrupted by the Czarist bureaucracy.

This paved the way for the study of Tagore's work on more scientific lines and on the basis of the translations of his works from the original. The pioneers of Bengali studies in our country were M.I. Tubyansky and the Indian revolutionary and scholar Pramathanath Datta.⁴ The latter came to the USSR in 1922 and was known here by the pseudonym Daud Ali Datta (1895-1955). Datta trained the earliest Soviet scholars of Bengali studies.

With the establishment of the Soviet power, the new Russia aimed at doing away with cultural backwardness and illiteracy of the major part of the population.⁵ And this made the treasures of the world culture far more accessible to the masses.

The great interest in India which had culminated in the unusual success of Rabindranath Tagore's works in Russia (as discussed in the previous chapters) now spread to wider circles of readers. The peoples of new Russia felt ardent sympathy for the Indian people reeling under the colonial yoke, and even strove to help. To the revolutionaries of Russia⁶ Tagore was not simply a personification of India at her best, he was much more. He was a symbol of India, suffering and fighting, and in this sense, a real ally.

The personal library of V.I. Lenin in Kremlin has a large number of books on India, many of them with his notes, including—what is presently important to us—the works of Tagore, both literary and publicist. One of these, *Nationalism*,⁷ was kept in his study along with the books which he regularly consulted.⁸

Naturally so. For, in this book, as observed by M.I. Tubyansky, “[the word] ‘imperialism’ more correctly responds to Tagore’s thoughts than the term ‘nationalism’ used by the writer”⁹ because here Tagore sharply and severely criticises imperialism, modern civilisation of the West and the colonial rule in India.

This book *Nationalism* contains Tagore’s lectures given during his visit to Japan and USA in 1916,¹⁰ a year before the October Revolution, Tagore said in Japan :

Political civilisation which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future.¹¹

Such lectures could not be and were not to the taste of many of his nationalist minded listeners. Obviously enough, the reception to be given by the Emperor was cancelled, and the invitations started thinning out. Those who were kind to him cooled down.¹²

From Japan Tagore came to the USA where he continued his lectures in the same vein. Censuring the idea of superiority of some nations over the others, he condemned, in no vague terms, the colonial regime in India :

While the small feeding bottle of our education is nearly dry, and sanitation sucks its own thumb in despair, the military organisation, the magisterial offices, the police, the criminal investigation department, the secret spy system attain to an abnormal girth in their waists occupying every inch of our country.¹³ With anger and disgust he added :

Its [Nation’s, i.e. Imperialism’s] one wish is to trade on the feebleness of the rest of the world like some insects that are bred on the paralysed flesh of victims kept just enough alive to make them toothsome and nutritious.¹⁴

An eloquent, pervasive picture of colonialism !

In USA too, the pro-imperialist minded circles received these lectures with a rebuff. The "Detroit Journal" warned the people against "such sickly saccharine mental poison with which Tagore would corrupt the minds of the youth of our great United States."¹⁵

Only six lectures later published in the book *Personality*,¹⁶ discussing art, aesthetics, education and philosophy were successful in the USA.

In the post-Revolution Marxist literary criticism the earliest appreciation of Tagore is by the noted revolutionary, eminent Soviet publicist, critic and social leader, A. Voronsky (1884-1943),¹⁷ who was close to Lunacharsky.

Voronsky's article was written almost on the first anniversary of the October Revolution, viz. in October 1918, in the midst of concern for the safety and security of the young Soviet republic. All around there was a wave of indignation over the dastardly attempt on the life of V. I. Lenin,¹⁸ and the country was slowly recovering from the terrible shock.

We may here mention that there was also concern over the rumours, fortunately unconfirmed, of Tagore's arrest for his help to Indian revolutionaries.¹⁹

"The grand old man Tagore has been arrested for being a revolutionary," writes A. Voronsky,—"how well it accords with his own works!"²⁰ A true assessment of Tagore!

For A. Voronsky Tagore's works respond to the spirit of revolution. Tagore to him is the best representative of mankind who desists from rotten bourgeois society and joins the ranks of protesters and innovators.

Tagore is further dear to Voronsky for his love of life and the joy of living. But Voronsky elucidates :

Life is sweet, enjoyable to Tagore not as an epicurean but as a great architect of life, a worker and an artist, carving from the coarse stone a fine, lovely legend...²¹

"Tagore's works," the critic stresses, "teach how to love life even at the moment of sorrow and agony, even in the face of death."²² How much these were needed at a time when the people were dying for the new to live! (As is known, the civil war was then going on).²³

Voronsky regards Tagore as a preceptor, as a fine representative of culture not only of India but of the whole world. "Amongst the modern poets and artists of the word Tagore stands out like the Himalayas. He is not simply a talented poet and an artist ; he is a prophet and a great teacher of life. It is not for nothing that in India the time of the life and work of Tagore has come to be called the Tagore period."²⁴

This is how Tagore was looked on by a leading Marxist critic in the earliest years after the Revolution, and how the new Russia at once accepted him as her own, giving him the place deserved.

Tagore came so close to the new Russia because he taught us to value the wonder that is life, and labour and creative work as the *highest manifestation of human activity* and despite the parasitic existence which the October Revolution had put an end to.

In Voronsky's appreciation we seem to hear the voice of those unforgettable, trying times. It appears to us, the voice of distant, friendly Russia was heard by Tagore too. And he welcomed the Russian Revolution.²⁵ (We shall dwell on this in the next chapter).

In the same year, viz. in 1918, came out a number of new editions of Tagore's works. Professor A.E. Gruzinsky whom we already cited, attempted the first verse translations of Tagore's poems—excerpts from *Gitanjali*, *Gardener*, and *Crescent Moon*.²⁶

A.E. Gruzinsky's preface to the collection of his translations²⁷ is of special interest, for it initiated our readers, for the first time, to the history of Bengali language and literature, and informed them of the existence of two literary styles in Bengali. Though Gruzinsky did reiterate some such comments on Tagore before the Revolution as, for instance, that "he united the effectiveness of European idealism with revelations of Eastern contemplation," he nonetheless fairly emphasized the humanist trend of his work. What is more important here is that, for the first time, a Russian critic rightly noticed Tagore's great role in the formation of modern Bengali language. "He [Tagore] wrote not in old literary forms but in a

form which restored the native literature to its proper natural soil, to the living language of the people.”²⁸

The earlier Pusheshnikov’s translation of *Gitanjali*²⁹ (edited by Ivan Bunin) and Tardov’s of the *Gardener*³⁰ were republished. Ukrainian translations of *Gardener* (by Yu. Siroi) and *Crescent Moon* (by Yu. Mikh) came out from Kiev.³¹

The journal “Free Education and Free School”³² reproduced in Russian W. W. Pearson’s article on Santiniketan, under the title “A Boys School” of the famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore”.³³

The year 1919 was the most trying for the young Soviet republic fighting at all fronts against foreign interventionists and white army.³⁴ Still, Tagore’s poems, with their note of optimism and courage, continued to be translated and published—even I. Sabashnikov’s full verse translations of *Gitanjali* and *Gardener* (see *infra*).

Critical writings on the Poet also continued to appear as before, developing further the ideas in A. Voronsky’s article.

In early 1919, K. Troyanovsky published a new article on Tagore³⁵ in the journal “Vestnik Znaniya” [Herald of Knowledge].³⁶ The author’s main idea was that differences of opinion did in no way underplay Tagore’s acceptance in the Soviet republic. The readers felt, in the inmost recesses of their souls, the sincerity of the poet’s feelings, the clarity and depth of his humanism. Here was a poet whose passionate love for his homeland had a touch of internationalism, so well sounding the mood of the day.

Troyanovsky writes :

The way Rabindranath feels and perceives the life around him, we may call him a truly national poet, a poet of his people. Deep inside his soul he is close to his people ; and this explains that great influence which he exercises on them—an influence, profound, continued, and perhaps abiding. He is a national bard in the true sense of this word ; and is, to the core, permeated with love for his people suffering and groaning under the foreign rule. All fanaticism and bigotry are alien to him. His patriotism

has a human touch because he has a steadfast faith in the unity of mankind. Here lies the element of internationalism in Tagore... The main position of Tagore is like this : Human race as a whole takes precedence over peoples by themselves... The rose of human race will keep up its perfection only if all peoples, while revealing their national and racial distinctive traits, do nevertheless remain bound by ties of love to the common trunk of humanity. Tagore's deep faith rests on the conviction that though the East and West must live their own life and have their own tasks to fulfil, their ultimate goal is one and the same... both the parts of the globe must live in mutual harmony.³⁷

K. Troyanovsky further writes : "In the conditions of the bourgeois structure this romantic internationalism is just an utopia." He also stresses that "Tagore's outlook is very deep but still not complex ; it is rather as clear as a crystal, even seemingly naive. *And just in this simplicity and apparent naivete lies the great influence of Tagore* (emphasis mine—author). And it is this that makes us fall to the charms of Tagore's sermons though our outlook is different and we must fight hard for our ideal."³⁸

Of course, the matter here is not of this "seemingly naivete". Tagore was anything but naive ; he had a keen, penetrating insight to expose and severely condemn the 'benefits' so called coming from the West and the 'good deeds' of the colonial regime, as we so clearly see in his *Nationalism*. But for him the essentials of true spirituality of man still lie in lofty moral precepts, in the assertions of moral purity. The moral ethics of Tagore rejects all falsehood, hypocrisy, mental sickness.

The article also has interesting observations made by the author before the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre,³⁹ obviously provoked by the rumours of Tagore's arrest. We know that the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy had destroyed all illusions. While many others in India did not know what to do, Tagore, in an act unprecedented in colonial history, voiced his condemnation by surrendering the knighthood conferred on him in 1915.⁴⁰ The British society could not take it lightly. Whenever Tagore came to England hereafter, he met with a certain reserve. As the English poet, William Radici, has recently admitted, "the return of his knighthood after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre

in Amritsar in 1919 effectively killed his English reputation."⁴¹ But this did not worry Tagore.

K. Troyanovsky, as though prophesying Jallianwalla Bagh and Tagore's natural reaction to this barbarous act, writes in the context of rumours of Tagore's arrest :

The British imperialists mercilessly mocked this charming idealism of Tagore ; and the cunning amongst them injected into Tagore's romantic idea of universal humanity the lesson of evil and hatred,—the one of 'real politics', teaching him thus to defend his ideal not with sermon of love but with force.⁴²

Later, in 1919, even during the most decisive days when the advance of Denikin's army towards Moscow, and that of Yudenich's towards Petrograd,⁴³ was being repulsed, the journal "Znamya" [The Banner], edited by A.V. Lunacharsky, published fresh translations of a few poems of Tagore made by A. Kaigorodov,⁴⁴ along with his inspired article on the Poet.⁴⁵ This article obviously was the voice of the period, when along with the urgent need of defending the homeland, it was also imperative to build a fraternity of all the toiling people, including of course, also of the East.

Kaigorodov at the very outset makes the point that, for achieving this end, while there is still time, we must know the Orient and India, of course.

This, among other things, could perhaps be best done through Tagore's songs, which pervade the life of the Indians, their joys and sorrows. He writes :

Nothing could make us so get into the soul of the distant, alluring, but so near and real India as the songs of Tagore. The life of the Indians moves to the music of Tagore's songs sung on all occasions of life...

Preparing ourselves for the great fraternity, we must try to understand what keeps the people alive in these distant lands, what makes their hearts beat, their minds think, and what words and thoughts they find for their joy and grief, for their anger and love. It is said that the songs reflect most truly the soul of the people, and farther one goes to the East, the more frequently and

more audibly one hears the songs of the people swarming under the hot or starry sky from dawn to dusk.

Travelling through India from one end to the other, if you ask at the festivals, bazaars or processions . . . , ask the shepherd sitting under the shade of the fig-tree, the peasant with his plough, the poor man sitting at the temple gate, or the girl with the pitcher on her shoulder, whose songs they sing with such passion, the reply would most surely be that these are the songs of Tagore.

The peoples of the East are younger in heart ; they are nearer nature, toiling whole life even under the open sky. Still, they have retained the need for and the gift of their folk songs, true folk songs, reflecting in bright eloquent images of the Oriental tongue all the shades of joy and beauty of life, the depth of wisdom and the intensity of the feeling of the people and their pride.⁴⁶

These lines, we feel, could have been written only by one who has himself lived and worked with the peoples of the East.

Kaigorodov continues :

India has been suffering for a long time under foreign oppression ; but the idea of freedom, of ardent love for the homeland, lives in the soul of every Hindu ; and the national poet of India cannot but share these feelings. His poems have a proud call for the steadfast urge forward on the path of devoted work for the suffering homeland.⁴⁷

Kaigorodov is only too well aware that, as Tagore's songs make us know the common Indian people, Tagore and his poems are our means of knowing the soul of Indian freedom fighters. Tagore's writings convey the rebellious spirit of the day ; and Tagore himself, sharing with his compatriots the ardent love of the homeland, is like a symbol of this new India surging forward to get out of the fetters of colonialism.

In conclusion, the author of the article gives expression to his deep admiration of Tagore's talent and personality, and states :

One would need a whole book to dwell on the amazing depth and diversity of the work of the great Hindu. If India is a land of wonders, then truly Rabindranath Tagore is its greatest and most precious wonder. It seems

as though the rich nature of the East prepared itself for hundreds of years, gathering into one all the treasures . . . of luxury and spirit, to create, in the ultimate end, all-pervading reason, the profoundest heart and the most perfect beauty which the whole world will come to admire.⁴⁸

How very true !

Along with Kaigorodov were also published fresh translations of Tagore made by Belousov.

In 1919, the said I. Sabashnikov, as though continuing the work of A. E. Gruzinsky, completed the first full verse translations of the English *Gitanjali*, and *Gardener*.⁴⁹ In the West, such translations in verse, so far as we know, were made by the English poet, William Radici, true from Bengali original, and published only as recently as in 1984.⁵⁰

Translations from the *Gardener* were also published in the journal "Vestnik Znaniya" [Herald of Knowledge] ;⁵¹ and a new edition of Z. Vengerova's translation of *The King of the Dark Chamber* in Odessa in 1919.⁵²

The young scholar M. I. Tubyansky who had only just completed his course at the Petrograd University publishes his first translation of Tagore,—of his article "The Genius of Japan" (1919),⁵³ from the book *Nationalism*. Here we see that Tagore understood very well how the rulers of the West had regard only for force and not for humanism :

Japan had all her wealth of humanity, her harmony of heroism and beauty, her depth of self-control and richness of self-expression ; yet the Western nations felt no respect for her till she proved that the bloodhounds of Satan are not only bred in the kennels of Europe but can also be domesticated in Japan and fed with man's miseries. They admit Japan's equality with themselves, only when they know that Japan also possesses the key to open the flood-gate of hell fire upon the fair earth whenever she chooses, and can dance, in their own measure, the devil dance of pillage, murder and ravishment of innocent women while the world goes to ruin.⁵⁴

The years 1920 and 1921 were also grim for the Soviet republic. The civil war had ended, yet all round was ruin, and in the Volga region the terrible famine of 1921.⁵⁵ Under these conditions, naturally, it was difficult to arrange sufficient publication of books inside the country. With Maksim Gorky's active assistance, arrangements were made with a publishing house 'Efron' in Berlin for having some Russian books published. In 1920, this publishing house brought out the translation of *The Home and the World*,⁵⁶ made by Z. Zhuravskaya, only one year after the English version, and that of *Nationalism*⁵⁷ made by A. Shklyaver and edited by M. N. Shvarts.

It is interesting that an anthology of verses and poems of poets from Ivanovo-Voznesensk area contained poems of Tagore along with those of the Russians.⁵⁸ This again shows how Russia had come to regard Tagore as one of her own. (It may be recalled here that Voronsky's aforementioned article [1918] on Tagore was also published from Ivanovo-Voznesensk and this might have left its mark on the area).

The economic situation of the country turned much better in 1922, and became more conducive to the upsurge of cultural activity. The need of the day was to satisfy the growing spiritual thirst of the masses awakened.

Very many new books were being published, including translations from foreign languages, both through government as well as numerous cooperative and private publishing houses.

Once again, Tagore's works start rolling out of the printing press, one after the other, in large numbers. In the five years from 1922 through 1927, over 30 individual titles came out in Russian alone. As earlier, the same book often came out in different translations. Almost all that was available of Tagore in the West in English⁵⁹ had been rendered into Russian. As already mentioned, the first translations, direct from Bengali, of poems and stories were also published during this time.

This influx of so many editions of Tagore's writings obviously evoked voluminous critical literature in the form of reviews, articles, prefaces—at times, controversial, with conflicting statements, but never indifferent.

Whatever the evaluation of the critics, enthusiasts bought out all the books at once to keep them in their personal libraries or to give out as presents.

In 1924, Engelhart's book *Rabindranath Tagore as a Man*,

*Poet and Thinker*⁶⁰, translated from German, was published in Russian.

Another book we would like to mention here is *Ex Oriente Lux! R. Tagore ...* (1923) by Shebuev.⁶¹

Most popular in these years was Tagore's literary prose, particularly stories. The seven separate collections of stories to come out in Russian translation included (a) *The (New) Stories from Tagore*, by S. A. Adrianov (1923); (b) *The Supreme Night* (12), by G. I. Gordon (1923); (c) *The Hungry Stones* (the largest, with 23 stories), by S. A. Adrianov (1925), edited by M. I. Tubyansky; (d) *Cloud and Sun* (8 stories, and *Chaturanga*), by G. P. Fedotov, E. R. Russat and M. I. Tubyansky from Bengali; and under his own editorship (1926); (e) *The Castaway* (4) and *Mashi* (3), by G. I. Gordon (1925); (f) *Selected Stories* (5), by L. Rakitin (1927).⁶² All these collections contained 32 different stories, of which only six had been included in the earlier, 1915 edition.

The novel *Gora* was published in three different Russian editions, immediately after the English version—by P. A. Voinov (1924); E. K. Pimenova (1924); and again by P. A. Voinov, under the editorship of M. I. Tubyansky (1926).⁶³

The Wreck, one of the most popular in the Soviet Union, was translated by S. A. Adrianov (1923; reprinted 1924), under Tubyansky's editorship.⁶⁴

The *Four Voices* (or *Broken Ties*) was translated by Yu. I. Demi, and published in 1925 with a foreword by Romain Rolland; again by E. Russat (1925), also included in the book *Cloud and Sun* under Tubyansky's editorship (1926); and by E. S. Khokhlova (1925) under the title *The Four*.⁶⁵

The novel *The Home and the World* after the Berlin edition of 1920, came out in translations made by S. A. Adrianov (1923) and A. M. Karnaukhova (1923, reprinted 1925).⁶⁶

My Reminiscences was published in translation from English (1924) and from Bengali (1927) by M. I. Tubyansky; and also by A. A. Gizetti (1922; reprinted 1925).⁶⁷

In 1927 was published *Glimpses of Bengal*, translated by O. M. Chervonsky.⁶⁸

The different editions of the plays were: (a) *Sacrifice, Sanyasi* translated by S. A. Adrianov, edited by V. G. Tan Bogoraz (1922); (b) *Plays and Poems in Prose*, by V. Gippius, D. R. Nosovich, Ada Oneshkovich-Yatsyn, edited by the famous

writer K. Chukovsky and S. Volsky (1923)—*Sacrifice, The King of the Dark Chamber, the Ascetic* (or *Sanyasi*) ; and (c) *The King of the Dark Chamber and Other Plays*, by S. A. Adrianov and G. P. Fedotov, edited by M. I. Tubyansky (1927), containing *The King of the Dark Chamber, the Ascetic* (or *Sanyasi*), *Sacrifice, the King and the Queen, Chitrangada, Malini and The Post Office*.⁶⁹

Collections of poems published were lesser in number. The most popular is *The Stray Birds*, by the well-known poetess, T. L. Shchepkina-Kupernik (1923 ; reprinted 1924) ; also by M. I. Tubyansky and I. Kolubovsky, under the title *The Fragments* (1923). Published for the first time was *Fruit Gathering*, by Pusheshnikov (1925) ; again reprinted were Pusheshnikov's translations of the *Gitanjali* and *Gardener* (1925). *The Gardener* was also translated afresh by M. Ber (1923) and G. Nosovich (1923). Similarly reprinted was the *Crescent Moon*, translated by Vasin (1925).⁷⁰

Lastly, two books of Tagore's lectures—*Nationalism* (besides the Berlin edition, new translation made by M. Tubyansky and I. Kolubovsky, 1922), and *Personality* by Kolubovsky (1922).⁷¹

Tagore's books (not only the individual translations in journals) were published also in other languages of the peoples of the USSR—for example, *Short Stories* in Georgian (1927) ; Tatar (1928) ; Bashkir (1928) ; the novel *The Wreck* in Azerbaijani (1929) ; *Gardener* in Belorussian (1927) ; translations of *Gitanjali* and *Gardener* from Bengali into Ukrainian by Ritter (1926).⁷²

An authentic, systematic write-up on Tagore, the second after Z. Vengerova's and the first in the Soviet Russia, was by Professor V. G. Tan Bogoraz (1865-1936), the eminent ethnographer, writer and public figure of his time.⁷³ It was published in 1922 by the Mysl' publishing house in the form of a long introduction, under the title *New India and Rabindranath Tagore*⁷⁴ in a book having first Russian translations of Tagore's plays *Sacrifice* and *The Ascetic* (or *Sanyasi*).

This marvellous work of the Soviet Marxist scholar has many fresh ideas, numerous thought-provoking parallels and analogies with Russian and world literature. Quite a major portion of the work deals with contemporary situation in India, with special reference to the caste problem and to the lot of

women. It also dwells in detail on the movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, on the growth of industry and labour movement.

Tagore's life and work are thus discussed against vast historical background. The author delves into the sources of Tagore's over-all outlook, gives a critical appreciation of his stories, and discovers how far these are linked with the plays, *Sacrifice and The Ascetic* (or *Sanyasi*) published in the book. He also discusses at length the novel *The Home and the World* and how far the Swadeshi movement is reflected therein.

Professor Tan Bogoraz begins with an account of Tagore's popularity :

He [Tagore] wields equally great influence in India and Japan, in Asia and Europe, in the old and the new world.

The English editions of his books have a large circulation in England and all over the continent.⁷⁵

Further, he discerns Tagore's bearings, outlines his significance to India, and his place in the social revolution there going on. The author's line of thought is that Tagore belongs both to the old and the new India. This, we feel, is right in the sense that Tagore, retaining with care all that is of value in the past, downright rejects all that is outlived, decayed. And, striving towards the new, and welcoming it, he never allows it to be uprooted from the rich soil of the past. No less ardently does he censor all blind imitation of Europe and the idea of the "new for the sake of new."

Professor Tan Bogoraz writes :

The social movement in India is more intense and horrible than even the political, however bloodless and passive you might call it. I fear, it will be comparatively bloodless only at its first stage...

A living embodiment of this vast, remarkable movement of its own kind is Rabindranath Tagore. He is as diverse, multi-faceted as India herself. He seems to have several faces at the same time—of a young, beautiful prince ; of a pensive Indian sage ; or a restless, wandering seeker of truth, an ascetic, a *sanyasi*.

Tagore is both from the old and the new India. His soul has its roots in the Vedas, in the ancient Indian poets from Kalidasa to Kabir. But he spent all the long seven decades of his life with the modern India. He grew with it.

One is amazed to see the best creations of the artist towards the twilight of his life.⁷⁶

While finding parallels in the world literature, Professor V. G. Tan Bogoraz places Tagore alongside Leo Tolstoy. He notes the influence of the great writers of Russia and India on Western culture.

Comparing and contrasting the over-all outlook and work of Leo Tolstoy and Rabindranath Tagore, the author exclaims :

One feels tempted to compare the Indian teacher of life, Rabindranath Tagore, not with any one far removed but with those closely familiar to us, and above all with our own prophet and teacher Tolstoy.

The literary critics even otherwise call Tagore the Indian Tolstoy. They say that Tolstoy was a prophet, unexpected for and not understandable to Europe, the prophet of Russian influences which have only now begun to be felt in the Western culture. Tagore is a similar prophet of Indian influences whose time has not yet come but will set in soon.

Tagore and Tolstoy—this comparison is both alluring and disturbing. Tagore, as is said, is an Indian prince. maybe dressed as a vagrant hermit. The knighthood conferred by England, of course, added nothing to his unwritten title. From Tolstoy too the former Russian government would have been only too ready to take away the counthood. . . .⁷⁷

Further, the author reveals the peculiarities of the creative genius of the two :

Tolstoy, as an artist, is only a prose writer. He never wrote poems, but as if to make up for this, he all the time painted large canvases covering the vast expanse of Russia. His colours are sombre and dim, as those of Russian artists Peredvizhniki,⁷⁸ and their vividness so lively, so unexcelled and hitherto unknown. Tagore constantly intertwines his hymns into flower garlands, intersperses them with legends and sayings, wise and fanciful, threads in small distinct stories as if to have filigree pairs, draws brightly gilded human miniatures and the Indian cinnabar. *In their philosophical insight both Tagore and Tolstoy belong to the same believing, religious type. Yet how very different they are* (emphasis mine—author) ! Tagore is so gentle,

subdued, restrained, in harmony with himself (a controversial point, however—author)⁷⁹; but Tolstoy, on the contrary, so restless, rebellious. Tagore ends one of his books with the words *Om Shanti*! But Tolstoy would have ended on the note: “I cannot be silent...”

So very different are Tagore and Tolstoy in their attitude to life and death! All his life Tolstoy thought and wrote of death, wished to compromise with it though could not. His main note is “Do not wish to...”, as in the *Death of Ivan Il'ich*.⁸⁰ Tagore thinks only of life: for him death has no entity, it is clothed in life. He, as it were, has inherited from the ancestors, from the ancient gods, the sacred enigma of creation, and the secret doors closed to every uninitiated are open before his spiritual gaze.

... As regards their religious-philosophical moods. Tagore ... is not open to doubts, and he mainly employs synthesis in place of analysis. He combines the individual mood with the distinctive tradition. Tolstoy instead has, in his belief, to pass through a tormenting quest, and does not have a tradition to fall upon, and is, one might say, his own father.⁸¹

Tan Bogoraz's analysis of Tagore's stories is comprehensive, emotional and still accurate, even supported by statistics.

He rightly said that “the key figures [in the stories] were more frequently women. In the first part of his work, Tan Bogoraz, with the approach of a scholar, gives the Russian reader an idea of the women's position in India in the 20's of this century :

The Indian women form a class, essentially worse oppressed than even the outcastes. A woman's life is spent, completely dependent upon man... The girls are given in marriage frequently from the day of birth itself. In India 2.5 million wives are below 11 years of age and 9 millions below 15.

Government's bold attempts in 1890 to fix 12 years as the marriageable age of a girl almost brought about a rebellion. Many thousands of people paraded Calcutta streets, shouting “Religion is in Danger!” The position of the widows is still worse. They are about 6 millions, including 100,000 below the age of 10 and 300,000 be-

low 15. Widowers in India are lesser in number ; they marry a second time. After the husband's death a widow's head is shaved clean and the glass bangles she wears on the wrist and feet are broken. Her jewellery and other valuables are taken and given over to the husband's relations. Then begins a terrible life—half prison-like, half mournful.⁸²

But the situation is changing for the better,—this is what one can know from other facts given by the author :

The new movement is fast catching up... Among the prosperous are educated women ; in big cities women are doctors, advocates, even journalists. The widows ... show an obvious urge to marry again.⁸³

Analysing Tagore's collection of short stories, Tan Bogoraz writes :

The collection *Mashi* ... is a garland of stories—short, precise, colourful, centering chiefly on woman characters. Tagore portrays with amazing, unsurpassed skill, in two to three words, with casual strokes of his pen, the homeless girls, submissive and suppressed wives, lonely, forsaken widows of India. New figures are also there, but most of the images are the same, the old traditional ones, like India, like the world itself.

Take, for instance, the very short story... *The River Stairs* (*Ghater Katha*). The story has only two characters—Kusum, a widow, and a *Sanyasi*, a wandering ascetic. These are some of the main old types in India. As long as there has been India, there have been such widows, such wandering monks. And they have been meeting in the same way on the river stairs. But Tagore's mastery has suddenly inflamed their hearts with restlessness, new and also old, immortally fresh and eternal, the restlessness of love half realised, subtle like the fragrance of a flower...

This theme disturbs Tagore, and he takes it up again in his play *The Ascetic* (or *Sanyasi*) as if continuing the story from the point where it ended on a note of separation. The *Sanyasi* takes to wandering but finds no peace. And after all his inner strife he decides to come back to nature and love. 'The bird soars to the sky not to fly into wilderness but to return to this great earth. I am free,

free from the raftless chain of renunciation. I am free in the midst of things and images and aims. The end is true endlessness. And love knows this truth. My girl, you are the soul of all being, and I shall never leave you.'

He returns to the same village in search of his beloved, but she is not there. He asks the old persons, the passers by, the men and women. She is not there anywhere. At last one woman tells him that she has died. 'No ; she cannot die ; no ; no !' Cries the shocked *Sanyasi*. 'But what have you to do with her death, *Sanyasi*?' 'Not me alone ; this would be the death of everything !' . . .⁸⁴

The theme of the other play, *Sacrifice*, is a sort of an echo, a projection of the struggle of old Brahmanism against Buddhism, and is thus historical and symbolic. Though there is no symbolism there, all of it is woven out of symbols. These symbols are the images of human passion, subjected to the highest strain and at the same time simple and devoid of all ornamentation. It is a clear bequest of the ancient Indian drama, observing the conditions of unity of time and space, securing its wholeness. You do not know what to compare it with. You start imagining Shakespeare ; but he is always immensely vast, so gigantic. You casually also think of Maeterlinck and discard him too. Compared with Tagore Maeterlinck seems so affected, so unreal and simply tedious and tiresome.

Only on coming to Sophocles you begin to see that maybe the Indian poet projected his inspirations on to his white snowy, pure and distinct marble forms. The concluding scene of the *Sacrifice*, where the old, spiritually mortified and ruined priest Raghupati goes, holding the hand of the poor girl Aparna, reminds us of Sophocles' *Oedipus on the Colonne*,—this is not the end, just the beginning. But maybe this is only an affinity between the two antiquities, the Hellenic and the Indian.⁸⁵

The critical study of the novel *The Home and the World* has an important place in the work. The clash between the old and the new ; the image of the modern Indian woman ; and, of course, the problems of Swadeshi, the national liberation movement,—these, in Tan Bogoraz's view, are the main themes of the novel.

While giving a critical appreciation of the novel, Tan Bogoraz has been able to capture and rightly delineate one of the most vital moments in the life of the writer—his withdrawal from the Swadeshi movement.

Tagore,—Tan Bogoraz stresses,—found within him still greater courage to stand apart even from his own compatriots and oppose the element of force in the Indian national movement. In *The Home and the World* written in the background of this movement, he even opposes the boycott movement, the passive resistance :

The novel is written in the form of three alternate 'diaries'. The main characters of the novel, the authors of these diaries, are Nikhil, a young minor raja, his wife Bimala, and friend Sandip who manages his estates and is also a leader of the nationalists. Nikhil is an idealist, a protagonist of peace. He has a Master's degree in philosophy from the Calcutta University and has the traditional, great respect for his guru.

Bimala is a modern woman, young and of subtle charm. Her dress and hair style are Western, but she wears *sindur* on her forehead in the Indian way. She speaks English and even has a special English governess. But true to the Indian custom, she touches her forehead with the dust from her husband's feet. Bimala is shown coming under Sandip's influence and even stealing money from her husband's safe to give to nationalists. Later, Sandip's rudeness disillusiones her, and she returns to her husband.

Everything seems to end on a happy note ; but Tagore, the artist, feels that there was nothing more or no reason for the young idealist pair to live for.

There are very few characters in the novel ; but each one of these is an unforgettable portrait. There is for instance, the Bari-Rani, the young widow of the brother of Nikhilesh who dies early⁸⁶. . . Nikhil and Bimala have something of the [18] 40's in Russia, and the rude Sandip with his unceremonious theory of the need for force and falsehood for the triumph of progress—something of the 1860's or even 80's : Bazarov, Mark Volokhov, and even Nechaev if you like.

This synchronism of moods is extremely typical of India. The 40's clash with the 60's and the 80's; the idealists with the revolutionaries; and these revolutionaries are of all kinds—non-frightening, self sacrificing; or instead the unscrupulous, and powerful, inclined to violence and Machiavellism.

In the end, Tan Bogoraz makes the interesting observation that the “modern India is like a child growing in the womb, a fast growing infant.”⁸⁷

B. G. Tan Bogoraz also gives a detailed account of Tagore's school at Bolpur, and observes :

In a different historical context, chiefly in another environment, Tolstoy's Yasnaya Polyana could be developed into the same harmonious, brilliant, serene school as Tagore's Abode of Peace. But the Russian nature is too severe, and the boundaries of life, both past and present, not colourful, rather pale and narrow.⁸⁸ . . .

Tan Bogoraz was one of the first Russian scholars (along with Nikolai Roerich) to meet Tagore and leave for us an eloquent account of this meeting.⁸⁹ He had met Tagore through the French scholar and Indologist, Sylvain Levi. (See next chapter).

Now to the distinguished and gifted Soviet Indologist, M. I. Tubyansky (1893-1943) who, we mentioned earlier, was virtually the first in our country to start the teaching of Bengali and to initiate the study of Tagore on systematic scientific lines.

A brilliant, talented and trusted⁹⁰ pupil of the universally known Russian Indologist, Academician F. I. Shcherbatskoi, Tubyansky completed his courses of study in 1919 at the Oriental faculty of the Petrograd University. In 1920 he joined the then just established Petrograd Institute of Living Oriental Languages to become one of the very first teachers of modern Indian languages, Hindi and Bengali, besides teaching Sanskrit. A little later, he also started teaching at the Leningrad University.⁹¹

To meet the great paucity of suitable materials for study and teaching, he compiled a text-book of Bengali, the first of its kind, and selections of Bengali with a glossary.⁹²

However, his main vocation was research ; and he was engaged in Buddhist studies under his teacher Shcherbatskoi, at the Asiatic Museum of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Tubyansky had an excellent linguistic training. Besides Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali, he knew Tibetan and Pali. For studying the Buddhist texts supposed to be lost in the original, he mastered Japanese, Chinese and Mongolian.

His first major work related to the study of the *Nyayapravesa*, with Sisiahita's commentary thereon, and Buddhist treatises on logic. He prepared an edition of a Sanskrit text with the use of the Chinese and Tibetan versions.⁹³

On an assignment from the Academy of Sciences he surveyed the manuscript materials of distinguished Russian scholars of Buddhist studies. V. P. Vasil'ev and V. V. Gorsky, and published a preliminary report thereon.⁹⁴

Along with his teacher Shcherbatskoi, and S. F. Ol'denburg, he worked out and published a plan for the establishment of an Institute of Buddhist Culture under the Academy of Sciences.⁹⁵

Although Bengali literature was not his main field of work, his contributions in this field, specially to Tagore studies, rank amongst the highest of that time in world scholarship.

Tubyansky had never been to India, yet he was well familiar with all the literature then available on Tagore, including that in Bengali.⁹⁶ In his knowledge of the subject he was nowhere lesser than the well-known British investigator of Tagore's work, E. Thompson ;⁹⁷ and most of his observations retain their significance to this day.

Tubyansky's first verse translation of Tagore from Bengali—that of a 'Short Poem in Prose' was published in the journal "Vostok" [The Orient] in 1922.⁹⁸ In 1925, the same journal published his translations (which can be considered a model) of 13 poems from *Gitanjali*⁹⁹, made from Bengali. In 1926 came out his translations of four stories of Tagore, the first made direct from Bengali into Russian.¹⁰⁰

Tubyansky's translation of *My Reminiscences* from Bengali was published in 1927.¹⁰¹ (Incidentally, he also translated Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Bande-mataram* from Bengali).¹⁰² From English he translated Tagore's *Nationalism*, *Stray Birds* and also *My Reminiscences*.¹⁰³

His critical appraisals of Tagore's writings are in form of Introductions to his translations of 'Short Poem in Prose'

(1922), *My Reminiscences* (from English, 1924), excerpts from *Gitanjali* (1925, containing his views on principles of translation), of short stories (1925—a short but informative note), *The Wreck* (1926), *Gora* (1926—one of the most complete), of plays (1927), and again of *My Reminiscences* (this time, from Bengali, 1927).¹⁰⁴ His last, major critical writing on Tagore is the 'Introduction' to the 8-volume edition of Tagore's Works planned by Mysl' publishers.¹⁰⁵ This most authentic writing on the subject is frequently referred to by the modern Soviet scholars of the subject.¹⁰⁶

Despite their brevity, these introduction and prefaces are unusually absorbing in content and are, as seen from the bibliography included in *My Reminiscences* (1927) based on vast material processed by the scholar.

It is a pity that his monograph on *Rabindranath Tagore and His Work* planned for publication in the 30's remained uncompleted and unpublished.¹⁰⁷

The Leningrad Archives of the USSR Academy of Sciences has two more of his unpublished works. One of these is *On the Closeness of Main Ideas of Tagore's Outlook to Modern Europe*; and the other on *Rabindranath Tagore and His World Outlook*.¹⁰⁸

In 1927, the Academy of Sciences sent Tubyansky to Mongolia¹⁰⁹ where he spent ten years on Buddhist and Tibetan studies, the work of his life. With this, Tubyansky's work on Bengali and Tagore studies came to an abrupt end, not to be taken up again.

In Mongolia he worked for a long time in the Tibetan Studies Section of the Scientific Research Committee of the Mongolian Peoples' Republic.¹¹⁰

There in the 30's he collaborated with Mongolian scholars in the compilation of a Tibetan-Mongol dictionary, collected valuable materials for his work on Indian materialism based on Tibetan sources, and prepared a valuable reference book on Indian and Tibetan medicine.

In Mongolia he also discovered the Sanskrit text of *Catuhstava* believed to have been lost, and prepared its translation with commentaries. He also worked on the translation of *A Chronicle of Buddhism in India, Tibet and Mongolia*, by Sampakhanpo (b Sam-pa-mkhan-po).¹¹¹

Much of his valuable work has unfortunately remained unfinished or unpublished.¹¹²

* * *

Now to Tubyansky's Tagore studies.

In his aforementioned Introduction to his first translation (1922) from Tagore, Tubyansky writes :

This is a maiden attempt, and an imperfect one, of translating, direct from Bengali into Russian. Both the languages are so different in their syntax and spirit that a literal translation poses difficulties . . . besides, in the matter of translation from Bengali into Russian, there is no tradition to fall upon.¹¹³

The Translator's views on principles of translation of Tagore's poems as set forth in his Introduction, we feel, retain their significance to this day :

Tagore writes his poems in Bengali in various metres and rhythms, with rich, diverse rhymes. Translating these in arbitrarily chosen metres would mean distorting all principles of translation of poetry . . .

"It is feasible to translate Tagore,"—Tubyansky continues—"retaining the metre and structure of the original, and the translator may have a certain simple conformity between the principles of Bengali and Russian metrics." But the author [Tubyansky] considers the task beyond his power and hopes that the problem would be solved by others. He himself has translated "(a) literally as far as possible, (b) without a definite metre of the verse, subjecting the speech only to some 'intuitive' laws of prose rhythm (c) preserving the silhouette of versification, that is the arrangement of lines and stanzas, giving an idea of the rhyme, and (d) retaining, to the extent possible, not only the structure of the phrase but also the distribution of words in lines."¹¹⁴

Tubyansky was perhaps the first investigator of the work of the great Indian writer to try to find the nature and origin of various assessments of the essence of Rabindranath Tagore's creative work. In the said Introduction to *Gitanjali* Tubyansky wrote :

In Russia, as in the West, Tagore is as famous, or popular (to be more correct), as he is misunderstood. Most readers, from the time of their first familiarity with

Tagore, remember, above all, the image of Tagore, the lyricist. And a great many of the more discerning among them are left with an impression that is scarcely favourable—of some languid, sentimental dreaminess in uncertain 'Oriental' accents, little original and 'probably imitating some English poets'. In wider circles, indiscriminately running after all that is "Oriental," he is taken up with joy as some sort of confirmation and embodiment of literary requirements and tastes developed by theosophical and other like movements. These declare Tagore a 'mystic'. And lastly, there are a few of those who, through the cobweb of distortions and pseudo-interpretations, have grasped the true, purely humane content of Tagore's poetry. But even for them he remains an enigmatic alien.¹¹⁵

We are to say that Tubyansky is not quite right here ; we saw this in the previous chapter.

"How does one explain such fate of one of the greatest writers of the modern times?"—asks Tubyansky. His own explanation is quite explicit :

Just as, in his own country, Tagore belongs to an ideological trend critically hostile to all occultism, so also in Europe, the false picture of the Indian culture imposed on her by theosophical currents, is hardly to be blamed, more than anything else, for the non-understanding of Tagore in Europe.¹¹⁶

Tubyansky firmly rejected the notion that Tagore was a mystic. He wrote :

Is Tagore really not a mystic ?,—asks the reader. No ; not a mystic ! Tagore himself did not much like being called a mystic. The word 'mystic' may have two connotations. It may mean the religious doctrine, which sees the aim of religion in the merger of personality with the absolute. Or, it may connote mysticism as being synonymous to occultism (or study of the mysterious), and stand for the doctrine laying claim to the knowledge of the world beyond. In both the senses the term 'mysticism' cannot be applied to the work of Tagore first because the personalism of Vaisnavism¹¹⁷ in general and of Tagore in particular contradicts all dissolving of the personality in anything, and secondly because the sensitive, living

heart and mind of poetry needs no artificial doctrine whatsoever.¹¹⁸

This key statement of M. I. Tubyansky, fully relevant even today, was of great value in building up a correct notion about Tagore and has been rated highly by modern Soviet Indology.

Tubyansky had thus been instrumental in giving a correct direction to the study of the work of the Indian writer. The question of sources of Tagore's outlook was discussed by him in the 'Introduction' to translation from English of *My Reminiscences* (1924). Here, he not only correctly estimated Tagore's outlook on the whole (individual correct assessments were there even in the pre-Revolution studies of Tagore in Russia) but also examined him on the methodologically correct scientific principle, in the background of the historical development of Indian philosophy and culture and its modern position.

What trend in the centuries-old history of Indian culture does Tubyansky associate with Tagore, and how correct is his assessment? As seen above, he talks of personalism of Vaishnavism in Tagore. He distinctly identifies two main trends in Indian thought which he calls 'impersonalism' and 'personalism'. He associates impersonalism with asceticism and pessimism resulting, in his opinion, "from the great importance given to meditation (known in India as *yoga*, *samadhi* etc.) as the foremost and most desired of emotional experiences of life . . ." Tubyansky continues :

Meditation, as directly clear, is a kind of withdrawal from world, from life, from self as living in the world. The foremost Indian religion of the past to exalt all these principles and establish them by keen philosophical systematisation and to develop the theory and practice of meditation is Buddhism . . . Disappearing in name, it virtually remains intact, because the foremost ideas of its philosophy had been accepted in the 9th century by the most authoritative philosopher since in India of the school of Vedanta—Sankara.¹¹⁹

What precisely did Tubyansky understand by 'personalism'. He said :

Along with the Buddhist-Vedantic impersonalism, so we concisely call the said trend, there has also always existed in India the opposite trend—namely, personalism whose

main trait is optimism, *acceptance* of life, of a personal good. The main doctrines with more or less this trend are those of Saivism, *Sakti-ism*. Vaishnavism (that is, the cult of Vishnu).¹²⁰

Leaving aside Saivism and *Sakti-ism*, Tubyansky dwells in detail on the characteristics of Vaishnavism. He regards the *Bhagavadgita* as the most important masterpiece of Vaishnavism and "the first large and developed exposition of Indian monotheism and of the idea of love for god, *Bhakti* as the means for salvation."¹²¹ Showing the characteristic of the doctrine of *avatars* for Vaishnavism, he proceeds to show that Bengali poetry is particularly rich in poems on the theme of love of one of Visnu's *avatars*, viz. of Krishna with Radha. The essence of the investigator's viewpoint is :

Pure idea of love for god and for the people contributed to the development and revelation of personalism long embodied in Vaishnavism. As a result, Vaishnavism, in some of its forms, acquired the nature of comparatively finished monotheism whose main content is to understand whole life as service to god : the usual temple cult, idol worship, and pilgrimage have in it a secondary or no place ; the idea of reincarnations loses its hold over the minds ; ethical slogans are raised ; struggle is waged against the caste structure.¹²²

Tubyansky arrives at the conclusion that "the contrast between impersonalism and personalism in Indian thought takes shape in Tagore's works."¹²³

Is Tubyansky's view true ? For answering this question we shall turn again to Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* written more than 15 years later, where, comparing Tagore with Gandhi, the author writes, "Tagore . . . represented essentially the cultural tradition of India, the tradition of accepting life in the fullness, Gandhi . . . represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism."¹²⁴

The surprisingly basic similarity in statements of Jawaharlal Nehru and M. Tubyansky is obvious. We also largely share Tubyansky's views. In our opinion, the most important element in Tagore's world outlook,—the component part of the humanist ideas contained in his numerous works—is the acceptance of life and denunciation of ascetic contemplation of world.

Tagore stresses that the highest source does not manifest itself in the outcome of ascetic exercises but is present in real human life, in the happiness of lovers, in a mother's smile and in the joy of creative work etc. . . .¹²⁵

Unfortunately, M. I. Tubyansky's use of the term 'personalism' has provoked a controversy amongst contemporary Soviet Indologists, and has even led them to underestimate the depth of the analysis made by him of Tagore's world outlook. Vera Novikova writes, for instance : "Tubyansky has drawn a wrong conclusion, attributing the conception of 'personalism' to Tagore."¹²⁶

Referring to this statement of Vera Novikova, L. S. Gamayunov observes that "in the works of this author [M. I. Tubyansky], contemporary scholars notice some assessments which they don't accept."¹²⁷ L. A. Strizhevskaya, without concrete elaboration of her idea, even asserts : "Many conclusions drawn and terminological definitions given by Tubyansky do now arouse controversies ; but, on the whole, there is a great deal of what is valuable and interesting in his writings."¹²⁸

These conclusions are based on the indignation caused by Tubyansky's choice, not quite successful, of the term for denoting one of the two main trends of Indian thought. The term 'personalism' is usually understood to mean "the religious-idealistic current prevalent in the American bourgeois philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th century and also in modern French philosophy."¹²⁹ Western personalism has nothing in common with Tagore's 'personalism' (as defined by Tubyansky). This has been clearly explained by the well-known Soviet scholar of Indian philosophy, A. D. Litman :

In Tagore there really are some positions which outwardly remind us of the ideas of personalism. His initial positions in solving the main problem of philosophy,—the calling of god as the supreme personality,—recall, in some measure, the departing principles of personalism. Nevertheless, it is not proper to identify with personalism Tagore's views on the whole and, what is more, to regard them 'as the highest triumph of personalism.' First of all, these do not have that coarse irrationalistic, voluntarist trend which was characteristic of the then fashionable current of American bourgeois philosophy. Tagore does not at all ignore the laws of nature and is thus not in-

clined to consider the phenomena as the result of the absolute arbitrariness of personality, as is done by the personalists... The jobbery over achievements of modern science which is typical of personalism is also alien to Tagore. Lastly, Tagore's views have nothing in common with the reactionary social-political trend which constitutes the essence of personalism as the ideology of the imperialist circles of U.S.A.¹³⁰

Rightly noting the failure of the use of the term 'personalism', A. D. Litman did not unfortunately mention that the main feature of Tagore's world outlook was correctly grasped by Tubyansky. Besides, there was still no other precise term for denoting that trend of philosophical thought of India to which Tagore belonged.

Of course, this does not mean that we share all the views of Tubyansky on Tagore's outlook. For instance, it is hardly right to assign all trends of Buddhism to 'impersonalism'. It is known, and we have mentioned it in our earlier writings, that the notion of *Bhakti*, the universal love between peoples, is characteristic not only of Vaishnavism (Vishnuism) but also of early Buddhism.¹³¹ Tagore himself also wrote that he was influenced by the ideas of early Buddhism. It is also not fully correct to relegate Sankara to 'impersonalists'.

Tubyansky wrote : "Sankara perceived the foremost ideas of Buddhism : pessimism, illusionism, asceticism, impersonalism, cult of self-indulgence."¹³² This position is only partly true and would need a detailed commentary. Jawaharlal Nehru well said of Sankara :

In the positions of Sankara's philosophy one feels the rejection of the world and departure from normal activity in quests of liberation of one's "I", which, in his eyes, was the final aim of every person... Despite all this Sankara was a remarkably energetic and active man. He was not an escapist confined to his shell or forest refuge and engaged in self perfecting unmindful of what happens to others.¹³³

The great Indian philosopher of the modern times, the patriot and humanist, Swami Vivekananda, declared with pride : "I am Sankara."¹³⁴ "It is this philosophy (the philosophy of Sankara) precisely that represents the dominant philosophical views of modern Hinduism," again says J. Nehru.¹³⁵ True, the philo-

sophy of Sankara was not acceptable to Tagore and Tubyansky rightly noticed it.

We know that Tagore's works are also influenced by Chaitanya, the founder of the Vaishnavite movement in Bengal. Tubyansky was the first Russian scholar to explain the deep association between Tagore's lyrics and Vaishnavite poetry. "The old Vaishnavite lyrical poetry is the main source of these poems of Tagore in which religious content assumes the form of love poetry. Purely erotic element is, however, completely absent in the religious lyrics of Tagore."¹³⁶

In his last published writing—the 'Introduction' to Tagore's *Collected Works* (1927),—M. I. Tubyansky reveals to us one more important literary and philosophical source of Tagore's work. "All his life, Tagore fought against the system of ascetic impersonalism which denounces personality, personal values, personal god, taking the world as illusion and personal love as sin. The other idea, namely the justification of personal love as opposed to asceticism, which found its highest expression in *Kumara-Sambhava*, one of the main works of the greatest poet dramatist of ancient India, Kalidasa (c. 5th cent., A.D.), is the guiding religious-ethical idea of Tagore's works. It is seen in the best work of young Tagore,—*Sanyasi* (or *The Ascetic*)."¹³⁷

It would be wrong to think that Tubyansky, while studying so deeply and thoroughly the influence of Indian traditional thought on the Poet, ignored the influence of European culture on him. In his Preface to Russian translations of *Gitanjali*, he wrote :

The poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, as his works in general, is, in its content, first completely Indian and secondly wholly contemporary. The modernness of the lyrical poetry is discerned in its freedom, inner and outer, from fetters of tradition... He finds himself, finds the reflection of his quests in old Bengali songs. He is no more closely bound to Indian mythology than the contemporary European poets to the mythology of Greece or, for example, Wagner with ancient German mythology. This is not the achievement of Tagore alone, the modern Bengali literature on the whole has assimilated this freedom... Bengali culture is rooted in India's past, but it is difficult to think of it without the influence of Europe, both in

form and content. In particular, Tagore's poetry was subject to strong influence of English poetry (specially, Shelley and Browning).¹³⁸

We also find Tubyansky comparing Tagore with Walt Whitman.

Tubyansky's Prefaces to novels *The Wreck* (1925) and *Gora* (1926) are of special interest. These give the first scholarly analysis of these works in their historical background not merely in the Soviet Union but outside India in general.

In his Preface to *Wreck*, Tubyansky compared this novel of Tagore with Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's story *Indira*, and showed that both the works were devoted to one of the most vital problems of Indian reality—that of the position of women. This, we know, was a subject extremely pertinent in 19th century Bengali literature. All enlighteners and writers, right from Rammohan Roy and Isvarachandra Vidyasagar, fought untiringly against the Sati system, against the prohibition of widow remarriage and against child marriage.

Developing these demands of enlighteners, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, — writes Tubyansky, — even supported a woman's right to personal happiness. Enriching and further developing the theme of Bankim's story, Rabindranath Tagore created in the image of Kamala a "more living and concrete person in the novel and perhaps in all his work in general."¹³⁹ Supporting, of course, the woman's right to personal happiness, Tagore, in Tubyansky's view, thus at the same time stressed the "moral strength of the Bengali woman, and her sense of duty and devotion to the ideal of life."¹⁴⁰

And even more interesting is the Preface to *Gora*,¹⁴¹ where Tubyansky dwells in detail on the history of the Brahma-Samaj, emphasizing that the Samaj sought to build the cult of a single god. He analyses the work of Keshav Chandra Sen, leading in 1865 to a split of the Samaj into Adi Brahmo Samaj headed by Rabindranath's father, and Indian Brahmo Samaj headed by his ownself. According to Tubyansky, the Adi Brahmo Samaj followed old forms of monotheism or "pantheism" reflected in the Upanishads, in the *Bhagavadgita*, this Bible of the Vaishnavites, the philosophy of the Vedanta, teachings of Kabir and Chaitanya. Keshav Chandra found inspiration in Christianity, specially in such American unitarists as Parker

and Emerson who enjoyed certain popularity in some circles of Bengali intelligentsia.

Outlining concrete ideological-historical background of Bengal in the 70's and 80's of the 19th century, the author of the Preface shows on the basis of convincing examples that in *Gora* Tagore has drawn a realistic picture of the "world of Bengali intellectual life of the late 19th century, revealed the struggle of reform against tradition." The focus is on the inter-action of Brahmo Samaj with neo-Hinduism ; and, as the critic rightly mentions, "the Brahma Samaj portrayed is of Keshav Chandra. Apparently, Tagore did not wish to write of his father. Of such characters in the novels as are members of the Brahmo Samaj, Paresh Babu alone", in Tubyansky's view, "could belong to Adi-Brahmo Samaj."

Tubyansky considers the short stories of Tagore "the most alluring part of his creative work." He adds : "These are not only completely perfect in the artistic sense . . . these easily reveal, best of all, the diversity and range of Tagore's art of portrayal as a humourist . . . tragedian . . . as a writer whose domain is the day to day life, and as a psychologist . . . The main themes of the stories relate to the plight of woman."¹⁴²

In the said Introduction (1927), Tubyansky gives also a fairly complete idea of social-political background of Tagore's work. Proceeding from a statement made by the writer himself, the investigator speaks of three main "revolutionary" (as Tagore, in his words, himself calls them) movements "shaping the spiritual conjuncture of his youth" : (a) the religious-reformation movement, initiated by Rammohan Roy, continued by the Poet's father, Debendranath Tagore (Roy founded in 1828 the so called Brahmo Samaj) ; (b) the literary movement, associated with the name of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894), the well-known Bengali novelist and the author of the national song, *Bande Mataram* ; and (c) the national-political awakening of Bengal, in whose environment Tagore grew.¹⁴³

Contemporary Soviet Indology also takes note of significance of these three factors in shaping Tagore's creative work. The distinguished Soviet Indologist, E. P. Chelyshev, for instance, mentions these in his article "On the Creative Method of Rabindranath Tagore."¹⁴⁴ These are discussed in our prefaces

to the 8-volume (1955-1957) and 12-volume (1961-1965) Russian editions of Tagore's *Collected Works*.¹⁴⁵

Further developing the views of V.G. Tan Bogoraz on Tagore's withdrawal from national-liberation movement, M. I. Tubyansky makes an interesting observation: "What inspires Tagore to repudiate the Indian national movement is its alienation from the basic question of Indian reality, namely that of Indian peasants. Chapters in *Gora*, and many of his short stories, bear evidence to his close familiarity with the life of the Indian peasants and he understands that no social movement in India has a chance of success if it is not associated with the solving of the peasant question. The position of the peasants is what precisely leads him to the idea of the need for socialism."¹⁴⁶

The critic further feels that the novel *Gora* has an extremely significant description of the Indian village, which means that the writer understood well that the Indian reality was not in keeping with the Indian ideals. "This fatal criticism is far from being grasped by the Indian community. So long as the villages are in such a plight, there can be no question of real political work among the people".¹⁴⁷ But, as the critic rightly states, neither *Gora* nor Tagore knows how really to approach the village problem. We feel, however, that Tubyansky failed to notice what we consider the most important idea of the novel—the need for unity of all forces of the country for waging the national-liberation struggle.

Though Tubyansky does not specifically mention Tagore's concrete participation in Swadeshi movement, his works do virtually contain an analysis of his [Tagore's] withdrawal from it. The scholar thinks that the "essence of Hinduism is in understanding deity as mother." But the religions with mother cult in India bear the least semblance to humanist visions of Tagore. The most popular among the people, according to the critic, is the image of mother Kali, and the history of the national-liberation movement is also associated with this cult. Tubyansky thinks that the 19th century brought in some sort of secularisation of this cult; the mother goddess made way for mother country; and thus emerged the political-religious, poetically expressed 'Bengali Marseillaise'—the hymn *Bande Mataram* by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya. Tagore, in

Tubyansky's view, "rises against this kind of cult and its degeneration in the form of nationalistic madness."¹⁴⁸

Tubyansky further strives to find the ideological and ethical roots of the principle of denouncing violence.

It [nationalism] is of the nature of a cult of naked force, cult of the power of the country, which could not be justified by any other ideals. Ideologically, it rests upon the ancient Indian cult of power (*sakti*) worshipped, from the olden times, in India, in the form of mother Kali. Tagore rejects *sakti*-ism as a religious delusion, and sees in the ideology of the Indian national movement... the revival of this cult. He devotes his novel *The Home and the World* to a criticism of this ideology.¹⁴⁹

The same views, according to Tubyansky, are the basis of the anti-imperialist, anti-war stand of Tagore :

Tagore sees the same very psychology of service to the above named power in modern European-American-Japanese imperialism, and dedicates the English translation (1916) of his play *Sacrifice* to "heroes voting for peace when the goddess of war asks for human sacrifices". Tagore's speeches in Japan and USA boldly expose imperialism and world war from the same viewpoint.¹⁵⁰

Continuing his analysis, Tubyansky affirms that in *Gora* Tagore creates his own image of "mother country" where he portrays not the goddess but a living woman—Gora's mother, Anandamayee. Tubyansky also feels that the main image in the novel is that of Anandamayee and not of Gora.¹⁵¹ This, of course, is a controversial point. But Tubyansky is certainly right when he stresses that the finding of Anandamayee for Gora is for Tagore the finding of whole India.

The critic has come to his own conclusions as regards the image of Gora. He believes, Gora vindicates the ideas of orthodox Hinduism so as to be closer to the believers, that is, it rests on not religious but social ground. The image of Gora is a type in the critic's view, "anticipates Gandhi, who, for remaining nearer to the people, wished to have his feet on the soil of popular Hinduism."¹⁵²

Tubyansky's works convincingly show that already in the 20's the Soviet Indology had achieved a great deal of success in having a correct assessment of Tagore's work, and that its

attainments were in no way inferior to Tagore studies abroad. Unfortunately, these early works have not yet gained the recognition deserved.

The aforementioned numerous publications and studies of Tagore's writings bear eloquent testimony both to the great achievements of Soviet Orientology and to singular popularity of Tagore amongst the Soviet readers to whom the Great October Socialist Revolution gave unrestricted access to treasures of world culture right from the very first decade of Soviet power. The Soviet public, we stress again, sought and found in Tagore the reflection of modern India, of the national-liberation movement of the great Indian people for which the peoples of the U.S.S.R. ever had a feeling of most profound support and sympathy. True, the numerous publications of Tagore's writings also did sometimes evoke pseudo-Marxist, vulgar-sociological and even simply nihilistic comments, but these were, in no way, representative of the actual state of things.

As Professor R. A. Ul'yanovsky, the eminent Soviet scholar, rightly mentioned in another context, such comments resulted from one-sided approach and numerous other reasons.

Professor Ul'yanovsky writes in his foreword to the Russian translation of M. K. Gandhi's *My Life* :

In the past, in interpreting Gandhism, Soviet writings have had errors resulting from a certain one-sided approach, which was justly and rightly criticised.

These mistakes have been due to a number of factors, the foremost of which, we may say, is the prolonged isolation of India from the Soviet Union and the international working class movement, the inadequate knowledge of India, of her specific conditions and profoundly original national traditions which found such lucid expression in Gandhism.¹⁵³

The reasons identified by Professor Ul'yanovsky for the mistakes made in the past in interpreting Gandhism apply fully to the vulgar-sociological errors made in evaluating Tagore.

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No small role in the formation of such sectarian treatments of questions related to the national liberation movement in India and Mahatma Gandhi's role therein, and also in the erroneous

assessments made of Tagore was played also by the work of M. N. Roy.¹⁵⁴

In a joint work of Soviet historians we read :

Roy's sectarian positions in forming an assessment of the revolution in the countries of the East, revealed particularly in his differences with V. I. Lenin on national-colonial question already at the Second Congress of Comintern; his negation of the role of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation movement etc., — all this rendered difficult the formation of a general front of leftist forces in the Indian national movement. Roy's political (sectarian) errors ultimately led to his elimination in 1929 from the Executive Committee of Comintern.¹⁵⁵

It is, we believe, M. N. Roy's statements on Gandhism that some of Soviet Orientalists, S. Vel'tman¹⁵⁶ for instance, depend upon while writing on Tagore from vulgar Marxist sectarian standpoint. In particular, quoting M. N. Roy, S. Vel'tman writes :

Gandhism is nothing but petty bourgeois humanitarianism . . . , helplessly getting lost before the struggle of historical forces. It sheds . . . tears on seeing the sufferings of the people in capitalist society, but these tears essentially are those of sorrow on the lost past . . . The spiritual culture of that age was built on barbarism and its simplicity on backwardness.

*"This definition, with some variations, is also applicable to Tagore"*¹⁵⁷ (emphasis mine—author), adds S. Vel'tman himself.

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Here, it should be also borne in mind that the literary criticism of the 20's-30's came partly under negative influence of the errors in the work of first Proletcult¹⁵⁸ and then RAPP [Russian Association of Proletarian Writers].¹⁵⁹ As V. I. Lenin stated in October 1920 :

Only a precise knowledge and transformation of the culture created by the entire development of mankind will enable us to create a proletarian culture. The latter is not clutched out of thin air; it is not an invention of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture. *That is all nonsense* (emphasis mine—author).

Proletarian culture must be the logical development of the store of knowledge mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalist, land-owner and bureaucratic society.¹⁶⁰

From the very first years of the existence of RAPP this organisation was "criticized by the Party for its sectarianism and arrogance, and its retention of vestiges of proletcult ideology... The vulgar sociology and dogmatism of the members of RAPP hampered a proper understanding of the tasks and prospects of the Soviet literature and a correct evaluation of the work of Maksim Gorky, V. V. Mayakovsky, A. N. Tolstoy and other Soviet writers ... it thus hindered the development of Soviet literature."¹⁶¹

It, of course, sometimes hindered the appraisal of Tagore too, and gave rise to certain articles in journals and papers published by RAPP. The RAPP was dissolved by the 1932 resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (B) on the "Rebuilding of Literary, Art Organisations," thus establishing the USSR Writers' Union.¹⁶²

S. Vel'tman's articles on Tagore, published in 1923-28¹⁶³ have some individual positions which are more or less acceptable, but these get lost in the mass of contradictory, superficial and for the most part simply conjectural and incorrect judgments.

S. Vel'tman begins one of his last articles (1928), virtually denying the independent value of modern Indian culture. He declares in a peremptory manner that Tagore "is a representative of that culture which, shedding off primitive forms, is only now beginning to associate itself with the West European civilization"¹⁶⁴(! ?).

We noticed some such obscure, odd views in M.N. Roy's quotation given earlier. Further on, Vel'tman opines that Rabindranath Tagore "personifies calmness and complete conciliation", but only a few lines later, overtly contradicts his ownself—"Here [in *Sacrifice*], the protest against the shedding of blood at the altar of the temple turns into rebellion against god"¹⁶⁵. (emphasis mine—author).

Denying then Tagore's very struggle against the vestiges of the past, Vel'tman says that "by turning his face towards past history of India, Rabindranath Tagore seeks there a refuge from all social and public ills of his country."¹⁶⁶

By hackneyed repetition of what some pre-Revolution critics had written, Vel'tman asserts that "the ideological base of [Tagore's] literary work was prepared by all that atmosphere which surrounded him from the early years. God, in some form or the other, is the main motif of his poetry . . . his work is thoroughly saturated with religious-moral tendency . . . and modern India, with her social and economic struggle, does not fit in in his works and far outreaches Tagore's ideals."¹⁶⁷

So it would be seen clearly that, according to Vel'tman, there is in Tagore only god and nothing else. But, after a few paragraphs, he is obliged to admit just the opposite :

Tagore's novel [*The Home and the World*] paints the picture of *revolutionary mood in India* (emphasis mine—author), embodying itself in a movement of economic nature on the boundary of 1890's-1900's, unfolding the main element of Swadeshi . . . Tagore's merit lies in that he, in the person of his main characters, was not only able to show the struggle of the then dominant [ideological] currents but also through the rural bourgeois usurers etc. acting behind semi-proletariat intelligentsia and young students, Tagore could show the true social character of this movement in solving economic and political problems of that time . . .¹⁶⁸

Such observations are, unfortunately, fewer in S. Vel'tman's writings ; and are marred by comments of the type that "India's political life and social struggle somehow elude him [Tagore] and his field of vision."¹⁶⁹

Vel'tman has totally failed to grasp the importance of *Gora*, one of the major works of Tagore and of modern Bengali literature in general :

This novel [*Gora*] is not without interest for characterising the ideological mood of Hindu intelligentsia. However, it is felt, the treatment of the question of nationalism ever engaging Tagore's attention is, in this novel, if one may so put it, amateurish and rather not convincing.¹⁷⁰

Amateurish, of course, is Vel'tman himself and not Tagore. Besides, he does not at all seem to be aware of Tagore's scathing criticism of imperialism in his lectures on *Nationalism* known to everybody.

Further, S. Vel'tman even could not see the artistic excellence of Tagore's works. He has concocted baseless parallels

between the poetry of Tagore and that of Bal'mont and German impressionists. And, concluding his assessment of Tagore's creative work, he writes :

He [Tagore] creates reality not from the actual range of experience and perception of environment but through hazy, transparent shell. In place of a living picture there are words, instead of pathos—rhetoric.¹⁷¹

What an opinion !

Vel'tman's remarks are even more striking when he tries to give some positive views :

Sometimes exceptional melodiousness of his writing, distinctive charm and freshness of the theme, and interesting and captivating conception of his novels (*The Wreck*, *The Home and the World* etc.) secure him a definite place in European literature.¹⁷² [Where is Indian literature?—author].

It is not worth bothering the reader any more with the exposition of S. Vel'tman's abundant, striking comments. We dwelt upon these in far greater detail than deserved, for these show more clearly where the "sectarian treatment" which Professor R. Ul'yanovsky referred, could lead to.

In conclusion, we shall observe that though S. Vel'tman sums up his estimate by saying that Tagore remains an enigma for the Russian reader,¹⁷³ actually it is the other way round. Tagore indeed has remained an enigma for S. Vel'tman and his colleagues.

Such sectarian views on literary works were not only contradictory and obscure, these could spoil otherwise sombre scholars. Thus, for example, Professor V.A. Gurko-Kryazhin (1887-1931), a member of the presidium of the Orientalists' Association, who had first expressed his interesting, even if conflicting, opinions about Tagore's *The Home and the World*, later, under the influence of sectarian views, published some articles in a journal¹⁷⁴ of RAPP which, in their erroneousness surpassed even S. Vel'tman's.

So in his article on *The Home and the World* (1923) he wrote :

These [some analogies] show beyond doubt that they are based on social, economic processes, common for Russia (60's-70's) and India (late 19th and early 20th century). The over-all outlook of various ranks of intelli-

gentsia and Russian revolutionaries of the period of *Nechaevshchina* [the so called Nechaev movement] was the characteristic expression of the bourgeois *Sturm und Drang* started immediately after the liberation of the peasants. But we have already seen that the appearance of a character like Sandip was also preceded by the process of stupendous capitalisation of India, bringing to the surface the first detachments of native bourgeoisie. . . . The banner which Sandip asks to follow is the unfolded banner of the young Indian bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁵

But, as recently noted by the Soviet Indologist S.D. Serebryany,¹⁷⁶ even in these analogies we already have a tinge of vulgar-sociologist approach and not quite correct idea of social-economic history of India.

True, in this very article, he gives concise, fairly correct assessment of *The Home and the World*.

The novel has great psychological and artistic merits. It is not confined to a personal drama, and gives a broad picture of social relations, of the struggle of ideological relations, which converts it from a narrowly psychological to a social novel.¹⁷⁷

The language of the work, according to the critic, abounds in delicate thoughts and excellent metaphors, interspersed with fine verses.

But some years later he published articles which strike by their hackneyed views and are one of the worst on the subject. For instance, he wrote baselessly :

In all his works Tagore is a mystic, theosophist . . . and certainly not an innocent observer like Walt Whitman or Esenin. He sheafs the phenomena of nature through colourless filters, erasing the individual features and imparting some sort of stamp of beauty of its own kind . . . The main features of Tagore's creative, social visage are mysticism, conciliation, hazy dreaminess, taken as profound philosophy, social quietism . . . Tagore has a large number of admirers from amongst the readers who run after Oriental exoticism, of so called 'Indian' depth of thought and mysticism.¹⁷⁸

As we see, Gurko-Kryazhin condemns not only the writer but also the readers. The critic also does not, of course, accept the artistic merit of Tagore's work :

Tagore's reflexes are subdued by heavy rhetoric, 'cunning' symbolism and literary eloquence.¹⁷⁹

Enough is enough !!

As we earlier mentioned, it remains for us only to add that such 'cunning' critics could not appreciate even Maksim Gorky and V.V. Mayakovsky.

There is, of course, no need of citing here such other critics as V. Reikh, V. Bragin etc. We can now see what dogmatic sectarianism is !

Such critics represent only their own selves. The Soviet readers never had anything to do with them. They [Soviet readers of course, not such critics] always admire Maksim Gorky, V. V. Mayakovsky and R. Tagore.

Not so vulgar and dogmatic but quite vague and containing undertones of some of the later vulgar-sociological estimates of Tagore are the prefaces to *Nationalism* and *Personality* (1922),¹⁸⁰ written by one of the translators of these books, I. Ya. Kolubovsky.

I. Ya. Kolubovsky, not directly familiar with the origin and growth of philosophical, aesthetic and social views of Tagore, on the whole was unable to appreciate properly these two collections of Tagore's lectures. For instance, though Tagore never rejected the achievements of Western science and even wrote some popular essays on the subject, Kolubovsky tried to show that Tagore denounced the relevance of science. He wrote :

The science of the physical, of the flesh, will come, and it can be only within the civilisation which Tagore rejects. In the non-acceptance of its future power we see the main onesidedness of Tagore's views.

It is Kolubovsky's appraisal of Tagore's over-all outlook that is one-sided. True, he tries to show the vitally active nature of Tagore's idealism but here too he emphasises onesidedly and not fairly that the religious element and not realistic vision is dominant in Tagore.

Tagore is the poet of life, and religious form of some of his poems, whatever the connotation, is mostly a tradition, which even the earliest authors of critical reviews could grasp. What tradition did Kolubovsky follow ?

Further, although in his preface to the translation of *Nationalism*, Kolubovsky rightly notes that "the most substantial in Tagore's criticism [of the West] should perhaps be the reference to development of forces of self-destruction in European culture, firmly drawing it to the brink of ruin", he [Kolubovsky] hesitated to accept the right of Tagore the idealist, to have a realistic vision of life. He writes :

Even if Tagore is right in his evil prophesies, does he not contradict his ownself simultaneously with his sermon of peaceful coming together of the East and the West? . . . The words about the synthesis due remain only words, but the real ways to it are not indicated. The national-state vacuum of the East must spread its emptiness to the last limits of the West, and then, from somewhere, there will come unseen the revolution which will give to the spirit absolute dominance over flesh. But Rabindranath Tagore is least of all a realistic politician. And that is why his conception is only a parody of real revolution. ¹⁸¹

Tagore is an idealist in the highest and most pervasive sense of the word : he is an idealist of life. We discern in his noble traits the image of an idealist philosopher, important and vitally active, maybe the last one. But all idealism leads to the negation of reality and does not therefore give the true theory of life, always based on the acceptance of the directly real.¹⁸²

Of course, Rabindranath Tagore was an idealist, and many of his social views were utopian. But the artist's genius and sense of reality enacted him to see farther and deeper than many contemporaries. A convincing proof of Tagore's having a realistic vision is, for example, that he was almost the first of his countrymen to be able to discern the meaning of the Revolution in Russia through the smog of anti-Soviet propaganda then widely spread in the West.

Much more interesting than all these sometimes little intelligible, contradictory judgements is Kolubovsky's opinion about Tagore's school :

One cannot but notice Tagore's points of contact with the great and most free teachers of the West. The ideas

of education . . . remind us of Tolstoy's views on education. The considerations of preference of the living word over books also have a Platonic coincidence.¹⁸³

Now again to criticism proper. We have already talked a great deal of Tubyansky. But we also have interesting, valuable assessments by other distinguished Soviet Orientalists who were not specially studying Tagore—for instance, Academician S. F. Ol'denburg and Professor P. G. Ritter.

In his article on Tagore contributed to the Encyclopaedic Dictionary *Granat* Professor Ritter cited many facts from the creative biography of Tagore which the Soviet readers came to know for the first time. He, like Tubyansky, also referred to the influence on Tagore of Vaishnavite lyrical poetry, specially of Chandidasa and Vidyapati, and also of the English poets, Shelley and Browning. He wrote :

His [Tagore's] acceptance of life to counterbalance the renunciation of the world which his father practised to the last, is radiantly joyful and full of all pervasive love. His ideal of mutual interpenetration of East and West and unification of the over-all human culture places him in the eyes of the whole world on a high pedestal, and is the culmination of over three millennia of literature and civilization of India, beginning with the poets-thinkers of the *Rigveda*, philosophers of the Upanishads, passing through the classics of Sanskrit literature . . . and poets in modern Indian languages, Kabir and Tulsidasa, and the Bengali Vaishnavites and Rabindranath Tagore, this symbol of regeneration and glorious future of India seeking liberation.¹⁸⁴

Academician S. F. Ol'denburg published an article in the journal "Ogonek" [Spark] in 1926 on the expected arrival of the Poet in our country. The main emphasis in this article was on the internationalism of Tagore :

One of the most remarkable representatives of this great universal movement [internationalism] is the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore . . . He is a Bengali, and we, the peoples of most diverse nationalities understand this man, and see in this Bengali poet a man intoxicated with the beauty of life, beauty of nature and beauty of man. He

speaks to us of his homeland Bengal, of the Ganges, and we hear him, and every one of us sees his own motherland, his own native river.¹⁸⁵

Academician Ol'denburg saw the vigour of Tagore's poetry first of all in love :

Tagore loves with inconceivable range and depth, he can love all that is, and he cannot but love . . . Secondly, no less wonderful than his love is his capacity to take in all that is around him, to dissolve in it completely to last shreds, leaving not the slightest remnant of his 'I' . . . In this abundance of feeling, in this capacity ever to respond to everything is the colossal power of Tagore. The Bengali poet, in Bengali words, has started speaking what can be understood by all—of course, by every one in one's own way.¹⁸⁶

Academician Ol'denburg was also able to discern the most important trait in the individuality of Tagore : "The red thread passing through whole life of Tagore, through all his poetry, in all his talks, in thought and feeling is 'labour, labour and labour'." Who else could express so well the essence of Tagore's personality ?

The assessments and views about the works of the great writer, expressed in various writings by true Marxist literary critics and scholars and by the wide Soviet public in general were brilliantly summed up by A. V. Lunacharsky. In his article (1923), "Indian Tolstoy" (devoted to Mahatma Gandhi), he wrote :

As is known, there presently lives in India one more great man, a brilliant, profound poet, pantheist, Rabindanath Tagore. Tagore also stands for *Swaraj*; he is also an ennobled nationalist. His works have many points of contact with Gandhi . . . But Tagore, as a poet, is more elegant . . . *His works, despite the inherent pantheistic mysticism, are so full of colours, most sensitive spiritual experience and truly great ideas that he is now one of the treasures of culture common to all mankind.*¹⁸⁷ (emphasis mine—author).

This assessment coming from Lunacharsky conveys the totality of opinion of the Soviet public. It is significant and

completely relevant today because it accurately expresses the main essence of Tagore's work and what is most basic in him, viz. his deeply humanist character. This also is the conclusion of modern Soviet study of Tagore, and such also is our assessment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) V. I. Lenin : "Better Fewer But Better"—in *Collected Works*, M., Progress Publishers, 1966, vol. 33, p. 500. This article was first published in "Pravda" on 3.3.1923.
- (2) — : "3rd Congress of the Communist International. Thesis" (June, 1921)—in *Collected Works*, vol. 32, pp. 454-5.
- (3) The Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of RSFSR for establishing a Central Institute for Living Oriental Languages was published on 7 September, 1920. It was signed by V. I. Lenin. (See *Aziatskii muzei. Leningradskoe otdelenie Instituta vostokovedeniya* [Asiatic Museum. Leningrad Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies], M., 1972, p. 35).
- The same year, in Moscow, the former Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages was finally reorganised into the Moscow Institute of Living Oriental Languages (later Moscow Institute of Orientalology). *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- (4) For Pramathnath Datta (Daud Ali Datta), see Chinmohan Schanavis : *Rus biplav o prabasi Bharatia biplavi* [Russian Revolution and Emigrant Indian Revolutionaries], Calcutta, Manisha, 1973, pp. 324-31; and his *Rabindranath o biplabi samaj* [Rabindranath and Revolutionary Society], Calcutta, 1985, pp. 203-4. See also our article in "Soviet Desh" (Bengali ed.), May 1984.
- (5) V. I. Lenin writes : "There is no other country [Czarist Russia] so barbarous and in which the masses of the people are *rubbed* to such an extent to education, light and knowledge—no other such country remains in Europe. Russia is an exception..." (V. I. Lenin : *Complete Works* [in Russian], 5th ed., vol. 23, p. 121).

After the October Revolution, universal education was introduced throughout the country. In October 1918 the

All Russian Central Executive Committee (A.R.C.E.C.) ratified the statute on standard 'Labour' Schools in the RSFSR which legalized free compulsory coeducational instruction for all children aged eight to seventeen in primary and secondary schools. (*GSE*, vol. 22, p. 425).

- (6) In March 1918, the President of the emigrant provisional Government of India, Mahendra Pratap, came to Petrograd. During his visit, a "true, unforgettable, massive" (according to M. Pratap's own recollections) meeting was arranged in Petrograd for expressing solidarity with India. The meeting was presided over by A. V. Lunacharsky.

In May 1919, a delegation headed by M. Pratap and Barkatullah, the Prime Minister of the said provisional Government, arrived in Moscow. V.I. Lenin received the delegation on 7 May 1919. This was followed by a few more meetings of Lenin with Indian revolutionaries. (K. A. Antonova, G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. G. Kotovsky : *Istoriya Indii : Kratkii ocherk* [History of India ; A Short Outline], M., 1973, p. 406).

In reply to the resolution of 17 February 1920 of the assembly of Indian revolutionaries, on 10 May, 1920, Lenin's message to the Indian revolutionaries association was broadcasted. The resolution of the assembly read : "The Indian revolutionaries express their deep gratitude for and their admiration of the great struggle carried by Soviet Russia for the liberation of all oppressed classes and peoples and especially for the liberation of India.

Great thanks to Soviet Russia for her having heard the cries of agony from the 315,000,000 people suffering under the yoke of imperialism. The mass meeting receives with joy the hand of friendship and help extended to oppressed India." ("Pravda", May 20, 1920. See V. I. Lenin : *Collected Works*, vol. 31, p. 554).

- (7) See the catalogue of the personal library of V. I. Lenin in Kremlin, Moscow.
- (8) *Nationalism* is on the list of books about Indian national liberation movement as ordered by V. I. Lenin and received by him on 16 February 1921 (see Chinmohan Sehanavis : *Rabindranather antarajatik chinta* [Rabindra-nath's International Thought], Calcutta, 1983, p. 56).

Besides, V. I. Lenin also had in his personal library Tagore's *The Home and the World*; *Personality*; and *Plays and Poems in Prose* (see note 7).

- (9) M. I. Tubyansky : Translator's Commentary [in Russian] —in Rabindranath Tagore : *Nationalism*, Pb., 1922, p. 90.
- (10) K. Kripalani : *Rabindranath Tagore ; A Biography*, Lnd., 1962. "War was still on, he sailed for Japan... Tagore stayed in Japan for a little over three months, visiting several places (p. 138)... In September 1916 Tagore sailed for the USA... After a month's stay in Japan on his way back Tagore returned to India in March 1917" (pp. 139-40).
- (11) R. Tagore : *Nationalism*, Lnd., Macmillan, 1917, pp. 59-60.
- (12) Stephen N. Hay : *Asian Ideas of East and West. Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China and India*. Cambridge, Mass., 1970.
- (13) R. Tagore : *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.
- (14) *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- (15) K. Kripalani : *Rabindranath Tagore ; A Life*, New Delhi, 1961, p. 152.
- (16) R. Tagore : *Personality ; Lectures delivered in America*, Lnd., Macmillan, 1917.
- (17) A. K. Voronsky, born in a priest's family, joined the Communist Party in 1904, member of a military unit (during the Revolution of 1905). First literary work published in 1911. In 1918-1920, member of the Soviet in Ivanovo-Voznesensk (a big industrial city, east of Moscow) and editor of the newspaper "Rabochii krai" [Worker's Region], a member of All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Russian Communist Party (B).

In 1921-1927 edited the first Soviet "thick" journal "Krasnaya Nov' " which was founded with the participation of V. I. Lenin and made it a centre for the new Soviet literature. Published afterwards prose by M. Gorky, A. P. Platonov, I. E. Babel, poems by S. Esenin, V. Mayakovsky, articles and reviews by A. V. Lunacharsky. He was a member of the editorial collegium of Goslitizdat [State Publishing House].

Among his numerous publications are *Art and Life* (1924); *Literary Types* (1925); *The Eyes of Art* (1928); *Literary Portraits*, vols. 1-2 (1928-29), of such Soviet writers as V. S. Ivanov, C. Seifullina, I. Babel, S. Esenin etc.; also autobiographical novellas *Live and Dead Waters* (1927; 3rd ed.: 1971); *the Seminary* (1933; 3rd ed.: 1966), *Zheliabov* (1934) and short stories. (*GSE*, vol. 5, p. 602).

- (18) On 30 August 1918 V. I. Lenin spoke before the workers of former Michelson plant. When he was proceeding to his car after the meeting, a certain SR woman terrorist suddenly shot at him, inflicting two serious wounds. For a few days Lenin's life remained in mortal danger, newspapers daily issued bulletins on the state of his health. Fortunately, Lenin, with his sound health, recovered fast—in two weeks. Daily, Lenin's mail was flooded with anxious letters and telegrams from all over the country wishing him very fast recovery, and with assurances of doing all for upholding socialism. During these very days, the Red army successfully repulsed the attack on the eastern front, and liberated Kazan and Simbirsk [now Ul'yanskovsk], the native city of Lenin. (*V. I. Lenin; A Biography* [in Russian], M., 1960, p. 415).
- (19) On 9 May 1918, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy Mr. Gourlay told Mr. Andrews that some Indian youths were facing trial for plotting against the British Government in San Francisco, and it is seen from the related documents that Rabindranath was involved along with them. Gourlay further said that the Poet was also alleged to have gone to USA via Japan with financial assistance from Germany.

Hearing such false allegations Rabindranath was upset. He deferred his trip to USA and wrote a letter of protest to the US President, Mr. Wilson (Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *Rabindra jibani o Rabindra sahitya prabesak*, vol. ii, Visva-Bharati, 1956, p. 133).

Chinmohan Sehanavis gives more concrete data : "When, on arresting the Ghadar revolutionaries in America, the 'Hindu Conspiracy Trial' started at San Francisco, attempts were made to bring in Rabindranath

as an accused." (See his *Rabindranather antarjatik chinta* [Rabindranath's International Thought], Calcutta, 1983, p. 58).

- (20) A. Voronsky : "*Po povodu odnogo aresta*" [On An Arrest] — "Rabochii krai", no. 168, 1 Oct. 1918.
- (21) *Ibid.*
- (22) *Ibid.*
- (23) By the end of the summer of 1918 three-fourths of the territory of Soviet Russia was in the hands of the interventionists and White Guards. The resolution of September 2, 1918, of the All Russian Central Executive Committee proclaimed the Soviet Republic a military camp (*GSE*, vol. 7, p. 44).
- (24) A. Voronsky : *op. cit.*
- (25) R. Tagore : "At the Cross Roads" — "The Modern Review", Calcutta, 1918, July, pp. 3-4.
- (26) — : *Proizvedeniya* [Works], tr. into verse [with introd. article] by A. E. Gruzinsky, M., Gran', 1918, 96 p. (Fragments from *Gitanjali*, *Gardener* and *Crescent Moon*).
- (27) *Ibid.*
- (28) A. E. Gruzinsky : *Rabindranath Tagore*. Preface in *Tagore*, tr. into verse by A. E. Gruzinsky. M., 1918, pp. 3-19.
- (29) R. Tagore : *Gitandzhali—Izbrannye pesnopeniya* [*Gitanjali—Select Songs*], tr. by N. Pusheshnikov, ed. by I. A. Bunin. Odessa, Yuzhnaya universal'naya biblioteka [South Universal Library], 1919, 74 p.
- (30) — : *Sadovnik ; Lirika lyubvi i zhizni* [*Gardener ; Lyrics of Love and Life*], tr. with a foreword by V. G. Tardov, M., Tvorchestvo, 1918. xiv, 82 p.
- (31) — : *Sadovnik—Lirika* [*Gardener—Lyrics*], tr. by Yu. Siroi. Kiev, Dzvin, 1918. 99p.
 Also *Lunnyi serp* [*Crescent Moon*], tr. by Yu. M(ikh). Kiev, Grunt, 1918, 63p. (Universal'naya biblioteka [Universal Library], no. 5).
- (32) The journal was published with editorial association of Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin's wife and friend), then a member of the Collegium of Ministry of Education. She wrote on problems of education, and is known to have been interested in Tagore's ideas on the subject.

- (33) W. W. Pearson : *Shkola dlya mal'chikov znamenitogo indusskogo poeta R. Tagora* [A Boy's School of the Famous Hindu Poet R. Tagore], tr. from English, with a foreword by R. Tagore—in "Svobodnoe vospitanie i svobodnaya trudovaya shkola" [Free Education and Free 'Labour' School], 1918, nos. 8-9, pp. 78-102.
- (34) In 1919, in the East (of Russia), Admiral Kolchak united the forces of the counter-revolution in Siberia and Urals; in the South, General Denikin created the so called "armed forces of Southern Russia"; in the North-West, General Yudenich formed the North-Western Corps in Estonia. The White Guards received from the Entente hundreds of thousands of rifles, thousands of machine-guns and large quantities of uniforms, equipment and ammunition. In 1919 Denikin received more than 100 tanks and armoured cars etc.
- In the beginning of 1919 the governments of Great Britain, France and USA began preparing a new campaign against the Soviet Russia assigning as chief forces Kolchak and Denikin's armies (*GSE*, vol. 7, p. 46).
- (35) K. Troyanovsky : *Tolstoi v Indii* [Tolstoy in India]—"Vestnik Zhizni" [Herald of Life], 1919, pp. 75-6.
- (36) The journal was published with editorial association of A. V. Lunacharsky.
- (37) K. Troyanovsky : *op. cit.*
- (38) *Ibid.*
- (39) "In April 1919, in Amritsar, an industrial centre of Punjab, India, the British troops fired on a mass meeting of working people who were protesting against the colonialist reign of terror. About 1,000 were killed and 2,000 wounded. The massacre led to popular uprisings in Punjab and other provinces which were ruthlessly suppressed by the British..." (V. I. Lenin : *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 561).
- (40) "The massacre took place on 13 April 1919, but so strict was the censorship on press, so heavy the iron curtain, that no news of the tragedy and the subsequent horrors was made public for several weeks. When the news reached Tagore he was so perturbed that, cancelling an important engagement in Santiniketan, he hurried to Calcutta and invited the political leaders to organize

a public meeting of protest over which he offered to preside, but so terror-stricken were the people that his offer came to nothing. He then did what his countrymen have never ceased to be grateful for... Without telling anyone and without taking even his own son into confidence, he wrote a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, on the night of 29 May 1919, resigning his knighthood. The letter was published on the morning of 2 June...

It was not the renunciation of Knighthood, which in any case added little to his stature, but the courage with which he voiced his people's anguish which fear had hushed in every other breast that gives its historic importance to the letter quoted above. It was a gesture which restored the self-respect of the nation and gave his people courage and faith at a time when they were sorely needed. The British ruling authorities never forgave what they deemed an unheard-of impertinence." (Krishna Kripalani : *Rabindranath Tagore ; A Biography*, Lnd., 1962, pp. 265-6).

- (41) R. Tagore : *Selected Poems*, tr. by William Radice. Hammonds Worth (etc.), Penguin Books, 1985, p. 27.
- (42) K. Troyanovsky : *op. cit.*
- (43) "On 13 October 1919 Denikin's troops captured Orel (south of Moscow). General Yudenich's army approached the outskirts of Petrograd by October 16. But the (Red) armies of the Southern Front inflicted heavy defeats in the latter half of October 1919 on General Denikin's troops near Orel. Orel was liberated on October 20.
On October 21, the (Red) army repelled Yudenich's corps. In December 1919, his defeated army was thrown back into the territory of Estonia." (*GSE*, vol. 7, p. 49).
- (44) R. Tagore : *Otryvki iz stikhotvorenii v proze* [Fragments from Poems in Prose], tr. by A. Kaigorodov—"Plamya" [Flame], Pg., 1919, no. 48, p. 8 ; no. 49, p. 5.
- (45) A. Kaigorodov : *Rabindranat Tagor* [Rabindranath Tagore]—"Plamya" [Flame], 1919, no. 42, pp. 7-9.
- (46) *Ibid.*
- (47) *Ibid.*

- (48) *Ibid.*
- (49) (i) R. Tagore : *V Preddverii vselenskogo chertoga...* [On the Threshold of Universal Chamber (poem)]; tr. by I. Belousov—"Plamya" [Flame], Pg., 1919, no. 46, p. 11.
 (ii) R. Tagore : *Sadovnik. Gitanjali* [Gardener. *Gitanjali*], tr. by I. Sabashnikov. Foreword by W. B. Yeats. M., Sabashnikov, 1919, x, 156p.
- (50) See note 41.
- (51) *Stikhotvoreniya Rabindranata Tagora (Iz knigi "Sadovnik")* [Tagore's Poems (from the *Gardener*)]—"Vestnik Zhizni" [Herald of Life], 1919, nos. 3-4, pp. 76-7.
- (52) R. Tagore : *Korol' temnogo pokoya* [The King of the Dark Chamber]; a play, tr. by Z. Vengerova. Odessa, Yuzhnaya universal'naya biblioteka, 1919, 111p.
- (53) — : *Genii Yaponii* [Genius of Japan], tr. by M.I. Tubyansky, Pg., Antei, 1919, 16 p.
- (54) *Ibid.*
- (55) "The first year of the New Economic Policy (1921) coincided with a crop failure in a huge territory. 'The crop failure and the famine,'—Lenin wrote,—'were the aftermath of Russia's backwardness and of seven years of war, the imperialist and then the civil war.' The Soviet Republic exerted titanic efforts to cope with the situation caused by the drought and the crop failure. To help the famine stricken population A.R.C.E.C. set up an all-Russia Commission headed by M. Kalinin. The country did all it could to relieve the famine; workers, office employees and Red Army men voluntarily deducted part of their pay and food rations, and the peasants collected food." (*A Short History of Russia* [in English], pt. ii, M., 1965, pp. 102-3).
- (56) R. Tagore : *Dom i mir; roman* [The Home and The World; a novel], tr. by G. Zhuravskaya. Berlin, Efron, [1920], 358p.
- (57) — : *Natsionalizm* [Nationalism], tr. by A. Shklyaver, ed. by M. N. Shvarts. Berlin, Efron, [1921], 126 p.
- (58) *Vzmakh* [Stroke]. *Stikhi i poemy* [Verses and Poems] of Ivanovo-Voznesensk poets. Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 1921. P. 21 : R. Tagore : *Chtoby tebya ne uznal ya*

tak skoro [Let me not know you so fast], tr. by S. Selyanin.

- (59) 1. *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, Lnd., 1916, NY, 1916.
 2. *Fruit Gathering*, Lnd., 1916, NY, 1916.
 3. *Stray Birds*, NY, 1916, Lnd., 1917.
 4. *My Reminiscences*, Lnd., 1917, NY, 1917.
 5. *Nationalism*, Lnd., 1917, NY, 1917.
 6. *Personality, Lectures delivered in America*, NY, 1917, Lnd., 1917.
 7. *Sacrifice and Other Plays*, Lnd., 1917, NY, 1917.
 8. *Mashi and Other Stories*, Lnd., 1918, NY, 1918.
 9. *Stories of Tagore*, NY, 1918.
 10. *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, Lnd., 1918, NY, 1918.
 11. *The Home and the World*, Lnd., 1919, NY, 1919.
 12. *The Wreck*, Lnd., 1921, NY, 1921.
 13. *The Fugitive*, Lnd., 1921, NY, 1921.
 14. *Creative Unity*, Lnd., 1922, NY, 1922.
 15. *Gora*, Lnd., 1924, NY, 1925.
 16. *Broken Ties and Other Stories*. Lnd., 1925, NY, 1926.

There were only a few new translations in the West after 1925.

- (60) E. Engelhardt : *Rubindranat Tagor kak chelovek, poet i myslitel'* [R. Tagore as a Man, Poet and Thinker]. Abridged tr. from German by A. S. Polotskaya. Ed. by A. G. Gornfel'd. L., Seyatel', 1924, 149 p.
- (61) P. G. Shebuev : *Ex Oriente lux ! Rabindranath Tagore* ... M., Vostok [The Orient], 1923, 48 p.
- (62) R. Tagore : (a) *Novye rasskazy* [New Stories]. (*Mashi and other Stories*). tr. by S. A. Adrianov. Pg.—M., Petrograd, 1923. 120 p. (19 stories).
 (b) *Schastlivaya noch'*. *Sbornik rasskazov* [Supreme Night. Collected Stories]. tr. by G. I. Gordon, Pg., Knizhnyi ugol', 1923. 152 p. (12 stories).
 (c) *Golodnye kamni* [Hungry Stones] tr. by S. A. Adrianov, ed. with an afterword by M. I. Tubyansky. L., Mysl', 1925, 246 p. (23 stories).
 (d) *Svet i teni* [lit. : *Light and Shadows*]. *Rasskazy* (*Cloud and Sun*), tr. from Bengali by M. I. Tubyansky, and from English by G. P. Fedotov and E. R. Russat ;

with notes and general editing by M. I. Tubyansky. L., Mysl', 1926, 255 p. (8 stories and *Chaturanga*).

(e) *Otverzhenyi* (*The Castaway*), tr. by G. I. Gordon. L., Seyatel', [1925]. 48 p. (4 stories).

Mashi (*Mashi*), tr. by G. I. Gordon. L., Seyatel', [1925], 47 p. (3 stories).

(f) *Izbrannye rasskazy* [Selected Stories], tr. by L. Rakitin. M., Ogonek, 1927, 46 p. (5 stories, and poems from *Crescent Moon*).

- (63) 1. R. Tagore : *Gora ; roman* (*Gora ; a novel*), tr. by P.V. Voinov. M.-L., Petrograd, 1924, 432 p.
 2. — : *Gora ; roman* (*Gora ; a novel*), tr. by E.K. Pimenova. M.-L., Kniga, 1924, 342 p.
 3. — : *Gora ; roman* (*Gora ; a novel*), tr. by P.A. Voinov. ed. with introd. and notes by M.I. Tubyansky, L. Mysl', 1926. 540 p.
- (64) R. Tagore : *Krushenie ; roman* (*The Wreck ; a novel*), tr. by S.A. Adrianov. Pg. -M., Petrograd, 1923, 270 p. 2nd ed. : L.-M., Petrograd, 1924. (With introd. by M.I. Tubyansky ; L., Mysl'. 1925).
- (65) 1. R. Tagore : *V chetyre golosa* [lit. : In Four Voices ; tr. of *Chaturanga*]. Tr. by Yu. N. Demi. Foreword by R. Rolland. L., Seyatel', 1925. 96 p.
 2. R. Tagore : *V chetyre golosa* [lit. : In Four Voices ; tr. of *Chaturanga*]. tr. by E. Russat. Foreword by R. Rolland L.-M., Puchina, 1925, 111 p.
 3. R. Tagore : *Chetyre* (lit. : Four ; tr. of *Chaturanga*). tr. by E.S. Khokhlova, ed. by A.V. Azov, Introd. article by R. Rolland. L., Gosizdat, 1925. 107 p.
 4. R. Tagore : *Chetvero* (lit. : Foursome ; tr. of *Chaturanga*), tr. by E. Russat,—in R. Tagore : *Svet i teni* [lit. : Light & Shadows ; tr. of *Cloud and Sun*] L., Mysl', 1926. pp. 151-248.
- (66) 1. R. Tagore : *Dom i mir : roman* [*The Home and the World ; a novel*], tr. by S.A. Adrianov. Pg., Petrograd, 1923, 194 p.
 2. — : *Dom i mir : roman* (*The Home and the World ; a novel*), tr. by A.M. Karnaukhova. Pg., Mysl', 1923, 228 p. 2nd ed. : L., 1925 232 p.

- (67) 1. R. Tagore : *Moya zhizn'* [lit : My Life ; tr. of *My Reminiscences*], tr. by A.A. Gizetti. Pg., 1922. (Reprinted 1924).
2. — : *Vospominaniya* [*My Reminiscences*], tr. with foreword and notes by M.I. Tubyansky. M.-L., Gosizdat, 1924. 235 p.
3. R. Tagore : *Vospominaniya* [*My Reminiscences*], tr. from Bengali by M.I. Tubyansky (with introd. and notes). L., Mysl', 1927. 220 p.
- (68) R. Tagore : *Bengaliya—Izbrannye otryvki iz pisem, 1885-1895.* (*Glimpses of Bengal. Selected Excerpts from Letters, 1885-1895*), tr. by O.P. Chervonsky. Foreword by the author. M.-L., Gosizdat, 1927. 99 p.
- (69) 1. R. Tagore : *Zhertvoprinoshenie. Otshel'nik* [*Sacrifice. The Ascetic*], tr. by S.A. Adrianov, ed. by V.G. Tan Bogoraz, Pg., Mysl', 1922.
2. R. Tagore : *P'esy i stikhotvoreniya v proze* [*Plays and Poems in Prose*], tr. by V.V. Gippius, D.P. Nosovich, Ada Onoshkovich-Yatsyna. ed. by S. Vol'sky & K. Chukovsky. M.-Pg., Gosizdat, 1923. 147 p. (Contents : *Sacrifice. The King of the Dark Chamber. Sanyasi. Gardener.*)
3. R. Tagore : *Korol' temnogo pokoya i drugie p'esy*, [*The King of the Dark Chamber and Other Plays*]; tr. by S.A. Adrianov and G.P. Fedotov, ed. with introd. and notes by M.I. Tubyansky. L., Mysl', 1927. 260 p.
(Contents : *The King of the Dark Chamber,—Sanyasi.—Sacrifice.—Raja o Rani—Chitra/Chitragada.—Malini.—Letter*).
- (70) 1. R. Tagore : *Zaletnye ptitsy* [*Stray Birds*], tr. by T.L. Shchepkina-Kupernik. Pg.-M., Petrograd, 1924. 72 p. Also Pg.-M., 1923.
2. — : *Fragmenty (iz sbornika 'Zaletnye ptitsy')* [*Fragments (from the Collection Stray Birds)*], tr. by I. Ya. Kolubovsky and M.I. Tubyansky. Pg., Stozhary, 1923. 30 p.
3. — : *Tsvety moego sada, Sadovnik—Gitandzhali.* [*Flowers from My Garden ; Gardener ; Gitanjali*].

- tr. by N.A. Pusheshnikov. M., Novaya zhizn', 1925, 186 p.
4. — : *Sadovnik. Izbrannye stikhi* [*Gardener. Selected Poems*], tr. by M. Ber. Kharkov, Gosizdat Ukrainy, 1923 47 p.
 5. — : *Sadovnik* [*Gardener*], tr. by D.P. Nosovich— in his *P'esy i stikhotvoreniya v proze* (Plays and Poems in Prose), M.-Pg., 1923, pp. 103-47.
 6. — : *Lunnyi serp* [*Crescent Moon*], tr. by I. B. Vasin. M., Sovremennye problemy, 1925. 79 p.
- (71) 1 R. Tagore : *Natsionalizm* [*Nationalism*], tr. by I. Ya. Kolubovsky and M.I. Tubyansky. Foreword by I.Ya. Kolubovsky. Pg., Academia, 1922. 93 p.
2. — : *Lichnoe* [*Personality*], tr. with foreword by I. Ya. Kolubovsky. Pg., Petrograd, 1922. 179 p.
- (72) 1. R. Tagore : *Strazh Nasledstva* (*Sampati Samarpan*). Tiflis, 1927. 27 p. (in Georgian short stories).
2. *Rasskazy (iz sbornika "Golodnye kamni")* [Stories from the Collection *Hungry Stones*], tr. by K. Girfan. Ufa, Bashkniga i Bashnarkompros, 1928. 80 p. (in Tatar).
 3. *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, tr. by K. Girfan. Ufa. Bashkniga, 1928. 80 p. (in Bashkir).
 4. R. Tagore : *Krushenie. roman* [*The Wreck ; a novel*], tr. by Kh. Azizbeili. Baku, Azerneshr, 1929. 284 p. (in Azerbaijani).
 5. — : *Sadovnik* [*Gardener*], tr. by Mordvilko. Minsk, TSB Molodnyaka, 1927. 116 p. (in Belorussian).
 6. — : *Gitandzhali* [From *Gitanjali*], tr. from Bengali by P.G. Ritter. Skhidnii svit, Kharkov, 1928, No. 3-4, pp. 263-7. (in Ukrainian).
 7. — : *Virshi* [*Poems*], tr. from Bengali by P.G. Ritter — "Skhid, Svit", Kharkov, 1927, No. 1. pp. 182-5 ; 1928, No. 3-4, pp. 264-7. No. 5, pp. 239-42. (in Ukrainian).
- (73) Tan Bogoraz's principal works deal with ethnology and folklore. He compiled text-books and dictionaries and devised writing systems for the languages of the northern people. From 1921 he was a professor at a number of higher educational institutions. His published works include a monograph on Chukchi, and novellas

on the life of the primitive people—for instance, *The Resurrected Tribe* (a novel; 1935). (GSE, vol. 3, p. 398).

His writings on Tagore include *New India and Rabindranath Tagore* (see note 74); *Za chertoi osedlosti* [Beyond the Lines (Asia)], "Rossiya", 1925, no. 1, pp. 219-21; *Tsvetnaya belletristika* (O tvorchestve R. Marana i R. Tagor) [...*Belles-Letters* (On the Work of R. Maran and R. Tagore)]; "Rossiya", M.-Pg., 1923, Feb., no. 6, pp. 22-4].

- (74) V. G. Tan Bogoraz : *Novaya Indiya i Rabindranat Tagor* [New India and Rabindranath Tagore],—in R. Tagore : *Zhertvoprinoshenie. Otshel'nik* [R. Tagore : *Sacrifice, The Ascetic*], Pg., Mysl', 1922. pp. 5-58.

(75) *Ibid.* p. 5.

(76) *Ibid.* pp. 36-7.

(77) *Ibid.* p. 7.

- (78) "Peredvizhniki" ("The Wanderers"), members of a democratic Russian art movement—the Society of the 'wandering' art exhibitions.

The Society was organised in 1870 in St. Petersburg (I. N. Kramskoi became an ideological leader of the new group).

The works of the "Peredvizhniki" were distinguished by great psychological insight and social generalisation, masterful typification and the ability to express the entire classes and social strata using individual images and subjects. The Society united almost all the leading artists of the country (I. E. Repin, V. I. Surikov, A. M. Vaznetsov, I. I. Levitan, V. A. Serov etc.). Many "Peredvizhniki" became part of Soviet artistic culture. The Society itself dissolved in 1923. (GSE, vol. 19, pp. 415-6).

- (79) It was not so. This is seen from Tagore's renouncing of his knighthood after Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, his articles on *Nationalism*, his ardent condemnation of fascism after knowing the truth about Mussolini's regime, etc. etc.

(80) *Death of Ivan Il'ich*, a short story by Leo Tolstoy.

(81) *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

(82) *Ibid.* p. 28.

- (83) *Ibid.* p. 29.
- (84) *Ibid.* pp. 44-6.
- (85) *Ibid.* pp. 47-8.
- (86) *Ibid.* pp. 41-2.
- (87) *Ibid.* p. 43.
- (88) *Ibid.* p.48.
- (89) V. G. Tan-Bogoraz : [Beyond the Lines of (Asia)], "Rossiya", 1925, no. 1 (See note 73).
- (90) Shcherbatskoi often left his department in the charge of Tubyansky whenever he went out.
- (91) *Aziatskii muzei* . . . , p. 263. (See note 3).
- (92) M. I. Tubyansky, comp : *Obraztsy Bengal'skoi literatury* [Specimens of Bengali Literature]. Pg., 1922. 129 p. (Petrograd Institute of Living Oriental Languages, no. 3). Lithographed. Text in Bengali.
- (93) II, p. 154.
- (94) 1. M. I. Tubyansky : *Predvaritel'noe soobshchenie o buddologicheskom rukopisnom nasledii V.P. Vasil'eva i V. V. Gorskogo* [A Preliminary Report on Buddhist Manuscript Heritage of V. P. Vasil'ev and V.V. Gorsky]—"Doklady AN SSSR", Oriental series, L., 1927, no. 3, pp. 59-64.
- 2. M. I. Tubyansky, *F. I. Shcherbatskoi and S. F. Ol'denburg : O rukopisnom nasledii V.P. Vasil'eva* [On the Manuscript Heritage of V. P. Vasil'ev]—"Izvestiya AN SSSR", L., 1926, ser. 6, no. 18, pp. 1815-8.
- (95) F. I. Shcherbatskoi, S. F. Ol'denburg, and M. I. Tubyansky : *Institut izucheniya buddiiskoi kul'tury* [Institute for Study of Buddhist Culture]—"Izvestiya AN SSSR". L., 1927, ser. 6, no. 18, pp. 1701-4.
- (96) See M. Tubyansky : 'Introduction' to *My Reminiscences* and to *Collected Works*, 1927. See notes 104-8.
- (97) E. Thompson : *Rabindranath Tagore : His Life and Work*. Lnd., OUP, 1921. Also *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist*, Lnd. (etc.), OUP, 1926 (new enlarged & revised ed. 1948).
- (98) R. Tagore : *Malen'kaya poema v proze* [A Short Poem in Prose], tr. from Bengali (with introd.) by M. I. Tubyansky, — "Vostok" [The Orient], kn. [bk.] 1, Pg., 1922, pp. 55-6.

- (99) R. Tagore : *Iz Gitandzali* [From *Gitanjali*], tr. from Bengali (with a preface) by M. I. Tubyansky—"Vostok" [The Orient], *kn* [bk] 5, M.-L, 1925, pp. 47-57.
- (100) R. Tagore : Tr. from Bengali :
 (a) *Tret'ya* [*Madhya-bartini* (*The Girl Between*)].
 (b) *Svet i teni* [*Megh O Raudra* (*Cloud and Sun*)].
 (c) *Pokayanie* [*Prayascita* (*The Atonement*)].
 (d) *Sud'ya* [*Vicharak* (*The Judge*)].
 —all translations included in *Svet i teni* [*Cloud and Sun*] (See note 62 d).
- (101) R. Tagore : *Vospominaniya* [*My Reminiscences*], tr. from Bengali by M. I. Tubyansky (with introduction and notes), L., Mysl', 1927. 220 p.
- (102) Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya : *Indiiskii natsional'nyi gimn* (*Bande Mataram*) [*Indian National Hymn* (*Bande Mataram*)], tr. from Bengali, with an afterword by M. I. Tubyansky—"Vostok" [The Orient], M.-Pg., 1923, *kn* [bk] 2, pp. 3-4.
- (103) R. Tagore : *Natsionalizm* [*Nationalism*], tr. by I. Ya. Kolubovsky and M. I. Tubyansky. Pg., Academia, 1922, 93 p.
Fragmenty [Fragments (*From Stray Birds*)]; tr. by I. Ya. Kolubovsky and M. I. Tubyansky. Pg., Stozhary, 1923, 30 p.
Vospominaniya [*My Reminiscences*], tr. by M. I. Tubyansky (with preface and notes), M.,-L. Gosizdat, 1924, 235 p.
- (104) M. I. Tubyansky :
 1. *Vstuplenie k Perevodu* [Introduction to translation] —in "Tagore : A Short Poem in Prose (Russian)", "Vostok", *kn* [bk] 1, Pg. 1922, p. 55.
 2. *Predislovie perevodchika* [Translator's preface] in R. Tagore : *My Reminiscences*, 1924, pp. 7-20.
 3. *Predislovie* [Preface]—in Tagore : *From Gitanjali*, 1925, pp. 47-51.
 4. *Vvedenie* [Introduction]—in Tagore : *The Wreck*, 1925, pp. 5-8.
 5. *Obshchee zamechanie po povodu rasskazov Tagora* [General Remarks on Tagore's Short Stories] in "Tagore : *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, 1925, pp. 235-6.

6. *Vvedenie* [Introduction] in Tagore : *Gora*, 1926, pp. 5-14.
 7. *Vvedenie k p'esam R. Tagora* [Introduction to Tagore's Plays]—in R. Tagore : *The King of the Dark Chamber and Other Plays*, 1927, pp. 5-15.
 8. *Vvedenie k 'Vospominaniyam' i k Sobraniyu sochinenii Tagora* [Introduction to Tagore's *My Reminiscences* and to *Collected Works*],—in Tagore : *My Reminiscences*, 1927, pp. 5-11.
- (105) The aforesaid Russian edition of Tagore's *My Reminiscences* (1927) had an advertisement about Tagore's *Collected Works* in 8 volumes to come out soon. This 8-volume edition was supposed among other things, to reprint all Mysl' editions of translations of Tagore's Works and a special collection of Tagore's articles. The 8-volume edition did not ultimately come out obviously because of Tubyansky's going away to Mongolia.
 - (106) For instance, this was referred to by E. P. Chelyshev (Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences), A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk, V. Ivbulis and others. This is also further mentioned in the text of this chapter.
 - (107) See A. Strizhevskaya : *Tvorchestvo Rabindranata Tagora v Rossii i v Sovetskom Soyuze* [R. Tagore's Works in Russia and Soviet Union]—in "Nauchnye doklady vysshei shkoly. Filologicheskie nauki" [Scientific Reports of the Institutes for Higher Education. Philology Section], 1963, no. 1, pp. 180-8.
 - (108) This information was kindly given to the author by E. K. Smirnova-Brosalina, Professor of Bengali at Oriental Faculty of the Leningrad University, and for this the author acknowledges his gratitude to her.
 - (109) *Asiatic Museum* . . . , p. 163.
 - (110) II, p. 154.
 - (111) *Ibid.*
 - (112) See note 9.
 - (113) See note 104-1.
 - (114) *Ibid.*
 - (115) See note 104-3.
 - (116) *Ibid.*

- (117) Vaishnavism (Visnuism)—one of the religious doctrines of Hinduism. As early as the middle of the 1st millenium B. C. a monotheistic tendency appeared in Vaishnavism and the doctrine of personal love and devotion to god denying the necessity of ritual. The South Indian philosopher and religious reformer Ramanuja (d. 1137) preached the *bhakti* doctrine and founded the Sri Vaishnavas sect, which long remained the major Vaishnavite sect until the present time. (GSE, vol. 5, p. 506). In Bengal Sri Chaitanya was the protagonist of this movement.
- (118) See note 115.
- (119) See note 104-2.
- (120) *Ibid.*
- (121) *Ibid.*
- (122) *Ibid.*
- (123) *Ibid.*
- (124) J. Nehru : *The Discovery of India*, NY, 1946, p. 342.
- (125) A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *Rabindranat Tagor ; kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk* [Rabindranath Tagore ; a Critical-Biographical Outline], M., Goslitizdat, 1961, pp. 30-1.
- (126) V. A. Novikova : *op. cit.*
- (127) L. S. Gamayunov : *Rabindranat Tagor v russkoi i sovet-skoi pechati* [R. Tagore in Russian and Soviet press]—in *Problemy istorii Indii i stran Srednego Vostoka* [Problems of History of India and of Countries of Middle East], M., 1972, pp. 253-97. See p. 270.
- (128) L. A. Strizhevskaya : *op. cit.*
- (129) See *Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. by M. Rosenthal and P. Yudin. M., Progress, 1967, p. 337.
- (130) A. D. Litman : *Filosofskie vzglyady R. Tagora* [Philosophical Views of R. Tagore],—in *Rabindranat Tagor ; k stoletiyu so dnya rozhdeniya, Sb. statei* [Rabindranath Tagore. A Birth Centenary Collection of Articles], pp. 85-116, M., 1961, p. 112.
- (131) A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- (132) M. Tubyansky : Translator's preface to his translation from English of Tagore's *My Reminiscences* (See note 104-2).
- (133) J. Nehru : *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, Signet press, p. 214.

- (134) *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, by Romain Rolland, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, 1953, p. 173.
- (135) J. Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- (136) See note 132.
- (137) See note 104 (8).
- (138) See note 104 (3).
- (139) See note 104 (4).
- (140) *Ibid.*
- (141) See note 104 (6).
- (142) See note 104 (5).
- (143) See note 104 (8).
- (144) E. P. Chelyshev : *O khudozhestvennom metode Rabindranata Tagora* [On Artistic Method of R. Tagore].—“KSINA”, no. 80, “Literaturovedenie” [Literary Studies]. M., 1965, pp. 62-79.
- (145) R. Tagore : *Sochineniya* [Works], vols. 1-8, tr. from Bengali ed. by V. Novikova. Introduction by A. Gnatyuk-Danil’chuk. M., Goslitizdat, 1955-1957.
—*Sobranie Sochinenii* [Collected Works], vols. 1-12, ed. by E. Bykova, A. Gnatyuk-Danil’chuk and V. Novikova. Introduction by A. Gnatyuk-Danil’chuk. M., Goslitizdat, 1961-1965.
- (146) See note 104 (6) (Preface to *Gora*).
- (147) *Ibid.*
- (148) See note 104 (2).
- (149) *Ibid.*
- (150) *Ibid.*
- (151) *Ibid.*
- (152) See note 104 (6) (Preface to *Gora*).
- (153) R.A. Ul’yanovsky : *M. K. Gandhi*—“*Moya zhizn’*”. *Pre-dislovie*. [M. K. Gandhi : *My Life*. Preface]. M., 1969, pp. 3-31.
- (154) Manabendra Nath Roy (1886-1948), Indian political leader. During 1910-1915 took part in the revolutionary movement against the British colonialists in India. In 1915, emigrated from India, later joined the Communists. Till 1920 lived in Mexico. Delegate to 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Congresses of Comintern. From 1922 *kandidat* (‘Candidate’) member and from 1924 full member of the Executive Committee of Communist

International. Later; he withdrew from the Communist Party. From 1940 headed in India the Radical Democratic Peoples' Party. Published the journal "Radical Humanist."

See V. I. Lenin : *Collected Works* [in Russian] notes.

- (155) See K. A. Antonova, G. M. Bongard Levin, G. G. Kotovsky : *The History of India ; A Short Outline* M., 1973, p. 406.
- (156) S. Vel'tman in the 20's was the Academic Secretary of the Academic Association of Orientalists.
- (157) S. Vel'tman : *The Orient in Belles Letters* [in Russian], M.-L., 1928. For a list of his writings on Tagore, see note 163 *infra*.
- (158) "Proletcult"—A proletarian cultural and educational organisation originated on the eve of the October Socialist Revolution. It was active from 1917 to 1920. It proclaimed as its task the formation of a proletarian culture by developing the proletariats' creative activity. Similar organisations originated in the early 20's in Great Britain, Germany and elsewhere, but proved to be impracticable. The Communist Party (of Soviet Russia) resolutely condemned and rejected proletcult's nihilistic attitude towards past progressive culture which was of great importance in forming a new socialist culture. (*GSE*, vol. 21, p. 265).
- (159) RAPP, a Soviet literary organisation, was formed in January 1925 as the main division of the VAPP (All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) founded in 1924.
 RAPP had the largest membership among the literary organisations of the second half of the 20's including, among its members working correspondents. (*GSE*, vol. 21, p. 494).
- (160) V. I. Lenin : *Collected Works*, vol. 31, p. 287.
- (161) *GSE*, vol. 21, p. 494 ; vol. 22, p. 460.
- (162) *GSE*, vol. 21, p. 494.
- (163) S. L. Vel'tman :
 1. *Rabindranat Tagor—poet i politik* [R. Tagore ; the Poet and Politician].—"Novyi Vostok" [New Orient], M., 1923, no. 3, pp. 553-9.

2. *Silueti Indii. Ocherk* (*O Gandhi i R. Tagore*). [Silhouettes of India. An Outline (On Gandhi and R. Tagore)]. — "Tridtsat' dnei" ["Thirty Days"], M., 1925, no. 9, pp. 87-93.
3. *Tagor i Indiya* [*Tagore and India*].—in M. Pavlovich, V. Gurko-Kryazhim and S. Vel'tman: *Indiya v bor'be za nezavisimost'* [India in Its Struggle For Independence], M., 1925, pp. 95-117.
4. *Litsom k proshlomu* (*Rabindranat Tagor*) [Face towards the Past (Rabindranath Tagore)].—"Na literaturnom postu", M. 1926, no. 7-8. pp. 40-3.
5. *Vostok i zapad v proizvedeniyakh Tagora* [East and West in Tagore's Works].—In his *Vostok v khudozhestvennoi literature* [The Orient in 'Belles Letters'], M-L., 1928, pp. 108-36

(164) See note 163 (5).

(165) *Ibid.*

(166) *Ibid.*

(167) *Ibid.*

(168) *Ibid.*

(169) *Ibid.*

(170) *Ibid.*

(171) *Ibid.*

(172) *Ibid.*

(173) *Ibid.*

- (174) 1. V. Kryazhin: *R. Tagor. 'Vospominaniya'*. [R. Tagore: "My Reminiscences.—"Pechat' i revolyutsiya" [Press and Revolution], 1924, no. 6. pp. 228-9.
2. V. A. Gurko-Kryazhin: *R. Tagor. "Bengaliya"* [R. Tagore. "Glimpses of Bengal"].—"Pechat' i revolyutsiya" [Press and Revolution], 1927, no. 8, pp. 198-200.

(175) V. A. Gurko-Kryazhin: *Indiya po romanu Rabindranata Tagora* [India in R. Tagore's Novel].—"Pechat' i revolyutsiya" [Press and Revolution], 1923, no. 5 (pp. 86-99).

(176) S. D. Serebryany and L. I. Saranskina: "F. M. Dostoevsky i R. Tagor (Istoricheskaya tipologiya, literaturnye vliyaniya)" [F.M. Dostoevsky and R. Tagore (Historical Typology, Literary Influences)].—in *Vostok-Zapad: Issledovaniya, perevody, publikatsii* [East-West: Studies,

- translations, publications], pp. 129-169 ; Nauka, 1985, p. 165.
- (177) V. A. Gurko-Kryazhin : *India in R. Tagore's Novel* pp. 90-1.
- (178) See note 174 (2).
- (179) *Ibid.*
- (180) 1. I. Ya. Kolubovsky : *R. Tagor. "Natsionalism". (Predislovie k perevodu)* [R. Tagore : *Nationalism. Preface to Translation*]. Pg., Akademiya, 1922, pp. 3-5.
2. I. Ya Kolubovsky : *R. Tagor : "Lichnoe" (Predislovie perevodchika)* [R. Tagore : *Personality (Translator's Preface)*]. M., Gosizdat, 1922, pp 3-8.
- (181) I. Ya. Kolubovsky : *Translator's Preface. in R. Tagor : "Lichnoe"* [R. Tagore : *Personality*]. 1922, p. 3.
- (182) I. Ya. Kolubovsky : *Preface to Translation in "R. Tagor. Nationalism"* [R. Tagore. *Nationalism*]. p. 4.
- (183) I. Ya. Kolubovsky : *Translator's Preface. in R. Tagor. "Lichnoe"* [R. Tagor. "*Personality*"]. 1922, pp. 6-7.
- (184) P. G. Ritter : *Tagor* [Tagore]—in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' "Granat"* [Granat Encyclopaedic Dictionary], 1927. vol. 41-vi, Cols. 685-686.
- (185) S. F. Ol'denburg : *Rabindranat Tagor* [Rabindranath Tagore], "Ogonek" [Spark], 1926, no. 51, p. 10.
- (186) *Ibid.*
- (187) A. V. Lunacharsky : *Indiiskii Tolstoi* [Indian Tolstoy]—"Krasnaya Niva", 1923, no. 1, pp. 28-30.

CHAPTER

FIVE

TAGORE DISCOVERS RUSSIA

*I am thankful, truly thankful to you all
who have helped me in visualising in a
concrete form the dream which I have
been carrying for a long time in mind.*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S
FAREWELL ADDRESS IN
MOSCOW ON 24 SEPT. 1930

9 September 1930. Berlin. A special train is ready to steam off from the railway station. The train deputed by the Soviet government, at the instance of A. V. Lunacharsky,¹ is for the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore and his entourage.

The long awaited Indian guest will at last arrive in new Russia on 11 September. All longed to see this well-known but still enigmatic person from the remote land—those who knew him from before the years of the Revolution ; and those who did not part with books of his poems even in the most terrible years of the civil war ; or those who chanced to read him only lately.

Tagore's cosy coupe was specially equipped for him. H's companions included his friend and secretary, Amiya Chakravarty,² himself a poet ; his nephew Saumyendranath Tagore,³ a young revolutionary not unknown to Moscow ; his personal physician, the American Dr. Harry Timbers,⁴ and one of his secretaries, Mr. Ariam.⁵ Tagore also had with him Margarete Einstein,⁶ the daughter of his new friend, the famous scientist Einstein who lent all support to Tagore's decision to visit USSR.

* * *

Dr. Amiya Chakravarty himself later gave an eloquent account of this journey :

I remember our delight when the fine assemblage of three cars with a special engine moved from Berlin towards the White-Russian Baltic station in Moscow.⁷ The poet had a very comfortable and finely equipped compartment and he hardly ever moved from his temporary home and studies. He did a lot of writing and spent much time viewing the landscape as the train rolled along.

We paid him an occasional visit, particularly after Saumyendranath Tagore had sung a few of Tagore's Bengali

songs which we knew must have been heard by the poet from his contiguous location in the train.

One particular song remains in my mind in which he spoke of the tension between joy and sorrow, the undulating rhythm that swung him all his life . . .

The tune harmonized with his present experience of crossing over to a country which had known much sorrow *but had triumphed over many vicissitudes towards a broader, more equitable civilisation in a vast country* [emphasis mine.—author].⁸

These favourite melodies obviously took the poet back to those years of distant childhood when, at the age of eight, he had first heard about the big, enigmatic country Russia, which somehow the all-powerful (as then seemed) British colonial powers feared so much.

In *My Reminiscences* Tagore writes :

Once, while my father was away in the Himalayas, that old bogey of the British government,⁹ the Russian invasion, came to be a subject of agitated conversation among the people. Some well-meaning lady friend had enlarged on the impending danger to my mother with all the circumstance of a prolific imagination. How could anybody tell from which of the Tibetan passes the Russian ghost might suddenly flash forth like a baleful comet ?

My mother was seriously alarmed. 'Won't you write to your father about the Russians,' she asked.

That letter, carrying the tidings of my mother's anxieties, was my first one to my father . . .

I got a reply to my letter. My father asked me not to be afraid ; if the Russians came, he would drive them away himself.¹⁰

As Keshav Chakravarty wittingly put it, this first letter to his father was Tagore's first *Rassiar chithi* [*Letter from Russia*].¹¹

We may recall that Tagore alludes to this fear of Russia in the mind of the colonial powers also in one of his most well known stories, *Cabuliwalla*.

When Cabuliwalla comes to the writer's house, after the usual exchange of greetings, "a conversation begins about . . . the Russians, the English and the frontier policy."¹²

Tagore's real familiarity with Russia proper, with her rich culture, one may assume, dates from the 80's of the 19th century when he, on the threshold of his career as a poet and a writer, was taken on the editorial board of the journal "Bharati".¹³ This journal was being published then by one of his elder brothers, Jyotirindranath, a talented writer, poet and translator. He, and particularly his wife, Kadambari Devi, as we know, greatly contributed to the formation of the poet in Tagore.

"Bharati" was published up to the 20's of the 20th century, and was one of the best periodicals of that time. In 1882, this journal published a valuable contribution of the Bengali scholar, Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya (1852-1910)¹⁴ on *Rus bhasa o sahitya* [Russian Language and Literature] in their historical perspective.⁵ This article *inter alia* contained copious information on ancient Russian literature, on Lomonosov, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Turgenev. Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya regarded Turgenev as the most distinguished representative of the Russian literature of the time. This might possibly be one of the reasons for Tagore's special interest in Turgenev.

Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya was quite close to the Tagore family : and it was with financial help from Rabindranath's father, Debendranath Tagore, that he went to study in Europe.¹⁶

In 1878 he was invited by the Russian Government to teach modern Indian languages at the St. Petersburg University and to improve his own knowledge of Russian. He taught his Russian students Bengali mainly from the materials published in "Bharati"¹⁷ for want of suitable text-books. He also taught Sanskrit.

In a couple of years' time, that is, in 1880, he had to leave St. Petersburg. However, he was the first Indian to submit a dissertation in German and get a doctorate from the Zurich University. He returned to Calcutta in 1883, to be received there with great enthusiasm.¹⁸ But he was not destined to have a smooth sailing.

Despite his complex, conflicting nature,¹⁹ he was a pioneer in study of Russian language and literature in the original, and before the coming of Pramathnath [Daud Ali] Datta to Soviet

Russia in 1922, the only teacher of Indian languages, specially Bengali, in Russia.

Nishikanta's fate reminds us of Gerasim Lebedev with the only difference that his good work to this day remains unacknowledged. However, it cannot be denied that Lebedev was far more composed and dedicated to his cause.

We have already referred to the fear of Russia in the minds of the colonial powers.

In an article published in "Sadhana" (1893) under the title "The English and the Indians", Tagore again refers to this fear of the Russians, and writes that the British spare no efforts to plug the holes through which the enemy can possibly penetrate. Tagore compares this disturbed state of mind of the British with that of the person, wearing heavy boots, who tramples his own fine field under his own feet, in his excitement to scare away the birds from the grain. The birds fly away, but his own grain stands damaged.²⁰

During the 1890's and 1900's Tagore directly or indirectly does again return to this theme—and not only once. He continues to scoff at the colonial powers in his journal "Sadhana".²¹

During this period, moreover, we find the evidence of his interest in socialist ideas. He wrote, for instance, in May 1893 :

I know not whether the socialistic ideal of more equal distribution of wealth is attainable but if not, the dispensation of providence is indeed cruel, and man is truly an unfortunate creature.²²

Tagore always reacted sharply to all events at home and abroad. He angrily condemned the British-Boer war. For example, in his expressive poem written "On the Last Day of the 19th Century" (1899), he censures the bloody wars and aimless egoistic cult of nationalism, the cult which he later judged so clearly in his lectures in USA and Japan in 1916 :

The last sun of the century gets amidst the bloody
Clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.
The naked passion of self love of Nation
In its drunken delirium of greed (*mine—author*)
Is dancing to the clash of steel and
The howling verses of vengeance.

The hungry self of the Nation shall burst
 In a violence of fury from its own shameless feeding.
 For it has made the world of its food.
 And lickening it, crunching it
 And swallowing it in big morsels.²³

This poem seems to forestall the political lyric of the last years of his life which pours forth in angered condemnation of fascist barbarism and brigandage of wars.²⁴ (It is not by chance alone that he included this poem in his book *Nationalism*).²⁵

The events transpiring in Russia towards the beginning of the century—the defeat of Czarist Russia in the war against Japan, coming as a serious setback to the regime ; the revolution of 1905 in Russia—found an immediate echo in India specially in Bengal. We shall mention, in particular, how the news of Maksim Gorky's arrest had evoked angry reaction in India. As rightly noted by Keshav Chakravarty, "a news of Maksim Gorky was then a news of the revolution. For the reader of that time Gorky and revolution were inseparable."²⁶

The events in Russia had a definite influence on the development of revolutionary movement in India during the years 1905-1908. We know, the flames of the movement had been further fanned by Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal. Tagore was a prominent figure in the liberation movement. As Romain Rolland wrote : "It was then that struck Rabindranath Tagore's finest, unjustly forgotten, historic hour. It marked the pinnacle of his political activity and popularity. . . An indefatigable speaker, he gave of his wonderful eloquence without stint. . . He composed national poems and anthems which became popular at once and were spread by ardent young men and women. . ."²⁷

But when terrorist forces started filtering into this movement (having, we feel, an analogy with the terrorist activity of Socialist Revolutionaries in Russia), Tagore withdrew from the movement.²⁸

He continued to keep a close watch on the development of the revolutionary movement in Russia. He, however, never supported terrorism anywhere but gave the revolutionaries their due for their heroism. This is seen clearly, for instance, also from his preface to the translation of an article by the American journalist, L. Scott, on Vera Sazanova, probably a Socialist Revolu-

tionary, shot by Czarist military forces for revolutionary activity. The article was published in 1908.²⁹

This condemnation of terrorism forms the keynote of virtually all publicist writings and even some literary masterpieces of Tagore. However, this should not be confused, as sometimes done, with Tagore's estimate of the inevitability and even need for a revolution, something that he so clearly expressed in his *Letters from Russia*.

This article on Vera Sazanova was published in the journal "Prabasi". We should say here that the "Prabasi" (in Bengali) and the "Modern Review" (in English) remained important forums for Tagore to express his views, right up to the last days of his life. Tagore's novel *Gora* and some other writings during 1907-1910 were published on the pages of "Prabasi."³⁰ Even before Tagore won the Nobel prize, the "Modern Review" had published translations of his poems, short stories and other writings.³¹ The *Letters from Russia* were first published on the pages of "Prabasi" and "Modern Review".³²

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Tagore's interest was not simply in political upheavals in Russia. As he himself later mentioned, he knew Russia and came to admire her above all from his readings of her great literature.

What had Tagore read of Russian classics? How did he appraise them? What influence, if any, did these have on him? These questions have not been much looked into by any research scholar either in the USSR or in India.³³ Besides, the material available is too scanty and too scattered.

Our brief observations here on this aspect have no pretensions to being exhaustive, and only attempt to chart out some contours of the circle of his interests.

We have already mentioned that Tagore's familiarity with the wealth of Russian literature goes back to early 1880's when, he, for instance, as we said earlier, read Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya's articles in "Bharati". His comments on Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, voiced in one of his letters, dating from 1889,³⁴ are an evidence of his great interest in Tolstoy even during these early years.

We may mention here in this context that though Tagore did not find *Anna Karenina* (as also, in Russia, Dostoevsky)³⁵ in

tune with himself, the influence of this novel of Tolstoy is, we feel, clearly perceptible in Tagore's innovatory writings *The Broken Ties* (Beng : *Nashta-nir*, 1898)³⁶ and *Eyesore* (Beng : *Chokher bali*, 1902)³⁷, asserting a woman's right for love and personal happiness, a theme taboo for the Bengali society of that time.

In 1900 Tagore reads with interest Tolstoy's *What is Art?* Though he does not agree with Tolstoy's opinions (he sometimes even entered into controversies with those whom he respected, for instance with Mahatma Gandhi), he recommends reading of Tolstoy's book and even proposes to write an article on the subject touched upon.

In his letter of 5 October 1900 from Shilaidaha Tagore writes :

Suren had sent me for reading Tolstoy's book *What is Art?* Received only today, haven't read it as yet. It seems to me, in the realm of art, he has some new approach. But one book cannot cover the approach to all the diverse subjects. And that approach is very old, and there is no limit to wrong approach.³⁸

Further, Tagore writes again on 9 October :

Read Tolstoy's book this morning. My idea does not concur with his. But very suggestive. I feel like discussing it in greater detail and writing a larger essay. There I can express my idea more extensively. The argument here is the same as quoted by you from Ruskin. However, there are many distinctive features. Tolstoy assimilated, like a magnet, all views so far formulated on art and aesthetics, and has expressed his opinion. The book is worth reading if you have not read it as yet.³⁹

One of Tagore's most favourite Russian writers was Ivan Turgenev (this we already referred to). In 1911, a friend of Tagore translated into Bengali, on his request, Turgenev's *Triumphant Love*.

Tagore himself read all that was available to him of Russian literature in English translation, and supported translations into Bengali.

It is natural that Tagore read a lot of Russian literature in the years of the birth of new Russia. It is at this time that transla-

tions of Pushkin, Lermontov, Fet, Nekrasov, are made into Bengali by his friend Satyendranath Datta, the talented translator and poet. Translations of Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and fresh renderings of Tolstoy also come out during this time.

We may also mention that Tagore was most enamoured of Maksim Gorky. Gorky's name is even more than once come across on the pages of Tagore's writings—for example, in the short story *Number One* [Payala nambar, 1917].⁴⁰ The heroine of Tagore's *Last Poem* (Shesher kavita, 1928) is shown reading Gorky's *Mother*.⁴¹

Of course, Tagore loved Chekhov too. He deeply pondered on Dostoevsky's works. Tagore's library in Rabindra Bhavan at Santiniketan has Ivan Bunin's books with presentation remarks for Tagore,—the same famous Bunin, who, we stated, had edited the translation of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. One could even further dwell on this subject, but the aim here has been very modest—that of giving some idea of Tagore's interest in Russian literature.

We shall only add that among the writers who made great impression on him, he somewhat unexpectedly names Vladimir Solov'ev.⁴² [Even not all Russian readers are aware of this poet].

The Russian revolutions of 1917, first the February revolution throwing the Czarist power, and then the October Revolution laying the foundation of the new Russia, evoked most wide response in India. About the February revolution an interesting article, under the title *Rashiyate rashtra biplav* [Revolution in Russia] was published by Ramananda Chatterjee in "Prabasi" in April 1917 :

No revolution in any country of the world has been accomplished on such a large scale in such a short time with such little bloodshed.⁴³

Thus, Ramananda Chatterjee correctly noted how degenerate and rotten was the Czarist regime to be fully razed down just in a few days time despite all its apparent might.

The October Revolution upset the British colonial powers. They shrouded all news of the Revolution in a thick mist of all

possible lies. Not only the British but even many Indian newspapers were full of calumnies and abuses for the Russian Revolution.

The fear of new Russia was now the fear of Bolshevism, the fear of penetration of revolutionary ideas, the fear of the intensification of the struggle for demands of freedom from colonial oppression. All efforts were accordingly concentrated on stopping the truth of the Soviet Russia from coming to colonial India.

In the environment so hostile to the October Revolution, Tagore was, as far as we know, the first Indian to have the wisdom and insight to understand properly the significance and the idea of the Russian Revolution. Moreover, he had the unique courage to put down his thoughts in the form of an article "At the Cross Roads", in "The Modern Review".⁴⁴ He could even manage to have this article published as a separate pamphlet.⁴⁵

Such a course of development of his thought, we feel, should possibly be followed in the background of his visit to USA and Japan in 1916, when he clearly discerned the "cannibalistic" character of the imperialist "Real Politik" and undauntedly spoke of it in his lectures on *Nationalism*.

In this he was also probably helped by Ramananda Chatterjee, who, as we have seen, had a positive interest in the revolutionary events in Russia and fearlessly published Tagore's article in his journal.

Tagore's article is written in a complex, Aesopian style ; and was obviously beyond the grasp of colonial censors. On the face of it, it deals with tasks before the Indians in the context of the assurances, given during the war, by the British government for allowing self-rule in its colonies. The promises were not kept, and this, as is known, spurred further the national liberation movement.⁴⁶

Tagore emphasized the egoistic, selfish character of British policy with regard to India :

No one can pretend to say that the British government in India has been or ever can be disinterested. It is a dependency upon which depends the prosperity of England, though time may some day prove that such prosperity has not been for the good of the ruling country. But so long as the present cult of the self-worship of the Nation pre-

vails, the subject races can only expect the fragmentary crumbs of benefit, and not the bread of life, from the hands of the powerful.⁴⁷

"What are we to do?" he asks. His reply is :
humble acceptance of small favours...this is not the proper solution. We must have power in order to claim justice which is real...we must gain it through victory and never otherwise.⁴⁸

He again speaks of the 'cannibalistic' character of the policy of the imperialist states in general, of the fact that India can have nothing in common with such a policy, the policy leading to wars (the present war is not the last) and massacre of men.

...political and commercial ambition is the ambition of cannibalism, and through its years of accumulation it must get ready for its carnival of suicide.

I cannot imagine that we shall ever be able to enter into competition about their own methods and objects with these Nation-worshippers...We do not have any natural pleasure or pride in indulging in orgies of massacre for the sake of its glory.

For nations also, it is wise not to indulge in cannibalism even at the risk of non-survival. For true survival is to live beyond life.

We must bear in mind that European civilisation, which is based on militant Nationalism, is on its trial in this war. We do not know what is going to be the end of it, for this may not be the last of such wars in Europe...The political ambitions of fighting races leave no other legacy to humanity but the legacy of ruins.⁴⁹

The present age is one of transition. It will inevitably lead to the dawn of a new life. Tagore writes :

Let us not seek the power which is in killing men and plundering them, but the moral power to stand against it, the moral power to suffer,—not merely in passive apathy, but in the enthusiasm of active purpose. This is an age of transition. The Dawn of a great tomorrow is breaking through its bank of clouds and the call of New Life comes with its message that man's strength is of the spirit, and not of the machine of organisation.⁵⁰

Where does one find this new life and these new ideals? Tagore finds them in the ideals of the Russian Revolution, in the self-sacrifice of Russian revolutionaries, in new Russia's refusal to follow the path of Real Politik. If the new Russia fails—the information available on the Russian Revolution is scanty—even this failure with the banner of true ideals will light up the path to the future :

We have heard that Modern Russia is floundering in its bottomless abyss of idealism because she has missed the sure foothold of the stern logic of Real Politik.

We know very little of the history of the present revolution in Russia, and with the scanty materials in our hands...all that we can say is that the time to judge has not yet come...No doubt if Modern Russia did try to adjust herself to the orthodox tradition of Nation-worship, she would be in a more comfortable situation today, but this *tremendousness of her struggle* (emphasis mine—author) and hopelessness of her tangles do not, in themselves, prove that she has gone astray. It is not unlikely that, as a nation, she will fail ; but if she fails with the flag of true ideals in her hands, her failure will fade, like the morning star, *only to usher in the sunrise of the New Age* (emphasis mine—author).

And India must not look back but must go forward towards the truth and ideal of this revolution :

If India must have her ambition, let it not be to scramble for the unholy feast of the barbarism of the past night, but to take the place in the procession of the morning going on the pilgrimage of truth,—the truth of man's soul.⁵¹

It is strange that this brilliant article was not discussed even in the most authoritative studies on Tagore and remained virtually untouched right until Tagore's birth centenary.⁵²

As the first appreciation, in India, of the Russian Revolution, this article, we believe, is of unique importance. At the same time, it is, we feel, a sort of a continuation of Tagore's *Nationalism*, a development of the ideas therein, and, in fact, a precursor of his subsequent *Letters from Russia*.

Though a bibliographical rarity, it has never been republished for reasons hardly known.

In 1920, Tagore came to England after the dramatic events of 1919. Here he had his first direct personal contact with the world of Russian culture—meeting the great Russian artist, thinker and writer, Nikolai Roerich, and his family.

Nikolai Roerich was one of the first Russians whom Tagore met personally. Their first meeting took place in London on 17 June 1920, at the instance of Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the future celebrated linguist, and then a student of the London School of Oriental Studies. In 1919 Suniti Kumar Chatterji came to know Yurii [George] Roerich (the son of Nikolai Roerich), the future Orientalist-Tibetologist, who was then studying Sanskrit at the same School. On being introduced to Yurii's father, Suniti Kumar Chatterji was greatly impressed by his paintings and his erudition. He also learnt that Nikolai Roerich had read almost all translations of Tagore's works and was his great admirer. So when Tagore came to London with his family in 1920, he hastened to arrange their meeting,—which laid the beginnings of mutual respect for each other and of the sincere, rather sophisticated friendship grown between them.

The circumstances under which this meeting took place are mentioned in the reminiscences of Nikolai Roerich himself and of Rabindranath's son, Rathindranath Tagore.

Rathindranath Tagore writes :

After dinner Suniti Chatterji brought in Nicholas, [Nikolai] Roerich, the Russian painter, and his two sons. Roerich showed us an album containing reproductions of his paintings which had been printed on the occasion of the celebration of his jubilee by his friends. The pictures are indeed remarkable. There is nothing in Western art to compare with them. Father was greatly impressed. One of the sons is studying Sanskrit in London, and the other architecture. The whole family is going to India next September. Their genuine simplicity and unaffected manners were charming—so refreshing, so different from the stiffness of the English. We should like to know them better.⁵³

And Nikolai Roerich, still full of impressions from his meeting with the poet, sent him the following letter on 24 June 1920 :

Dear Master,

Let my words remind you of Russia, where the lovely poetical images which you evoke bring beauty and solace to human life and your personality is surrounded by a halo of admiring respect. You bring into contemporary life that lofty spiritual joy, which gives strength to the seekers of a radiant future.

Please accept the heartfelt greetings of a Russian Artist."⁵⁴

Charmed by the artist and knowing fully well that it was not possible to have a complete idea of the artist's work from the album alone, Tagore himself visited Roerich in London in the second half of July 1920.⁵⁵ This was the time when Roerich was working on the Indian series of his paintings.

Tagore recorded his impressions in his first, unusually lengthy letter. This letter has served as the basis for many later assessments of Roerich's work in India and for the articles on him :

Your pictures, which I saw in your room in London, and some reproductions of your pictures, profoundly moved me. They made me realise one thing which is obvious and yet which one needs to discover for oneself over and over again ; it is that Truth is infinite. When I tried to find words to describe to myself what were the ideas which your pictures suggested, I failed. It was because the language of words can only express a particular aspect of Truth, and the language of pictures finds its domain in Truth where words have no access. Each art achieves its perfection when it opens for our mind the special gate of the infinite, whose key is in its exclusive possession. When a picture is great, we should not be able to say what it is, yet we should see it and know. It is the same with music. When one art can fully be explained by another, then it is a failure. Your pictures are distinct and yet not definable by words. *Your art is jealous of its independence, because it is great* (emphasis mine—author).⁵⁶

To Nikolai Roerich the letter was precious, and he always remembered it. He promptly sent a reply in which he wrote :

"Dear Master and Friend,

Since a long time, when the books of your verses were

my favourite reading, I cherished the dream of meeting you one day.

At present not only has this dream come true, but I possess your lines which are priceless to me.

I send my heartfelt greetings and my gratefulness to you which can be expressed only in one of the most beautiful Russian words 'Spasibo' which means 'God bless You'.⁵⁷

And on the pages of his diary Nikolai Roerich noted the indelible impression which this meeting made on him :

Dreamt of meeting Tagore and, lo ! the poet himself is in my studio on Queens Gatteras in London in 1920, Tagore heard of the Russians, and desired to meet, and this was the time when I was painting the Indian series "Offspring of the East". I remember the poet's surprise at this coincidence. I remember how nicely he came in, and how his saintly appearance made our hearts flutter. It is not for nothing when one says that the first impression is the most correct. Precisely the very first impression at once yielded full, profound reflection of the essence of Tagore.

Thus, this appearance of Tagore with all the penetrating talks and assessments of art remained unforgettable for us. Also unforgettable remained his letter saturated with impressions of our meeting.⁵⁸

On 2 October 1920 Nikolai Roerich, and, a little later, on 28 October Rabindranath Tagore left for the USA, where they kept up their contacts. As Roerich writes, "we met in America where in his lectures the poet spoke so convincingly of the unforgettable laws of beauty and of mutual human understanding. In the fuss of the Leviathan city (New York), Tagore's words sometimes sounded as paradoxical as the enchanting land of Tolstoy living in the heart of the great thinker."⁵⁹

The poet is believed to have said that civilisation awaits great completion of its soul in beauty. The January issue of the journal "The Art" for 1921 published Tagore's article on Nikolai Roerich.⁶⁰

However, in the hustle and bustle of the Leviathan city, these meetings were apparently only a passing phenomena. Roerich and Tagore could not see more of each other (after 1921), and their further association was only in the form of correspon-

dence in the 30's, full of mutual respect, exchange of ideas on major events of the day, and of deep concern for the fate of mankind.

True, in 1923-24, Nikolai Roerich's efforts to meet Tagore during his first visit to India turned out to be futile.⁶¹ Besides, both Nikolai Roerich and Rabindranath Tagore were under constant, though secret surveillance of the colonial powers, and they both knew this.⁶² We have no information on any correspondence between Roerich and Tagore during 1924-1927. Maybe, this was because of Roerich's preoccupation with a large expedition to the Himalayas to Tibet, Mongolia and Altai or, maybe, for other reasons.

After the expedition which almost had a tragic end because of provocational actions of the British intelligence service.⁶³ Roerich informed Tagore in his letter of July 1928 that he was back from the expedition.⁶⁴

* * *

After this, Rabindranath Tagore met another Soviet scholar, Professor V. G. Tan Bogoraz. [We referred to Professor Tan Bogoraz in quite some detail in the previous chapter].

In a short but lively sketch in one of his works, Professor Tan Bogoraz describes how Professor Sylvain Levi once invited him, specially for meeting Tagore. He recollects having seen his booklet *New India and Rabindranath Tagore* in Tagore's hands :

"I can't read it," Tagore said, pointing to the Russian letters. On his knees was lying a book of poems printed in rounded Bengali script.

"And this I can't read," I explained.

Tagore started laughing. Of course, we talked in English."

In his conversation with Tagore Professor Bogoraz showed interest in the Indian writer's visit to Japan and his attitude towards British rulers. Tagore answered the questions Professor Bogoraz was interested in⁶⁵

* * *

Unfortunately, we have no authentic data on what other Russians Tagore met around this time. It is quite probable, he met Academician F. I. Shcherbatskoi during the latter's long

official trip to Europe in 1920-23,—a trip sponsored by the USSR Academy of Sciences for promoting research and establishing contacts with Western scholars.⁶⁶ For, in 1923 as we know, Tagore sent a personal letter to Shcherbatskoi requesting for 'St. Petersburg Dictionary' which was at once sent to him by the Academy of Sciences.⁶⁷

From 1923 onwards, Tagore exchanged letters not only with Shcherbatskoi but also, as we shall be presently seeing, with the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Here, one cannot but also take note of the fact that certain Russians who were in no way friendly to new Russia, mostly emigres, sought to have contacts with Tagore. Thus, in 1922, Professor P. Vinogradov of the Oxford University (who had been acquainted with Tagore since 1914),⁶⁸ sent his circular letter of appeal to Rabindranath Tagore in India for helping the distressed famine-stricken people in a part of Soviet Russia. Tagore responded sympathetically and enthusiastically.⁶⁹ Another Russian, an Orientalist,⁷⁰ Bogdanov by name, took up some sort of assignment at Santiniketan. His sympathies apparently lay somewhere else—neither, of course, with the new Russia nor even with Santiniketan. And, when, there were complaints against him, Tagore was obliged to have his services terminated.⁷¹ [It is interesting that Tagore at this time harboured the idea of having someone from the Soviet Russia to teach at Santiniketan. We shall be speaking of it later].

Others to establish contact with Tagore maybe included Il'ya Tolstoy (the son of Leo Tolstoy).⁷²

However, such contacts were hardly able to influence Tagore's own mature outlook and insight into the true state of things.

Tagore's own high appraisal of the October Revolution which we see in his article "At the Cross Roads" was not to be changed, no matter what influences were brought to bear upon him. None could make him 'listen' to.

Tagore's yearning to visit this far-off land where a new life was 'in the making' continued to grow day by day. He did not know how to go about it. The Russian Consulates in Calcutta and other cities of India had been wound up long back ; the

USSR was only just beginning to have diplomatic representations in the West (England and France recognised USSR only in 1924).⁷³

It is therefore quite natural that when, in 1924, Tagore arrived in China at the invitation of the Chinese Association of University Lecturers to present a series of lectures, some of which were later published in his book *Talks in China* (1925)⁷⁴ and came to know that Peking had an official representative of the Soviet government, the young revolutionary and diplomat, Leo Karakhan,⁷⁵ he arranged a meeting with him.

The meeting was reported only in the local Chinese and in Japanese press at that time.⁷⁶ There was no report in India, USSR or in the West. This was possibly to avoid attracting unnecessary attention of the colonial secret services.

It was only from early 1970's that this fact of Tagore's meeting with L. Karakhan came to be widely known.⁷⁷

Judging from the reports of the local press, this was a very warm and meaningful meeting. It took place in the middle of May 1924, after Tagore felt rather irritated by the behaviour of the leftist section of Chinese youth who even resented his call to uphold the lofty ideals of humanitarianism and selflessness. In their eyes, Tagore was a "reactionary" dragging the country backward instead of showing it the way "forward".⁷⁸

True, the Chinese intelligentsia as a whole had a sympathetic attitude to Tagore's lectures; and the celebrated leader of the Chinese revolution, Sun yat-Sen had sent him a cable of greetings.⁷⁹

So, in the course of his meeting with L. Karakhan Tagore asserts :

Russian territory is mostly in the East, her traditional civilization is quite close to Eastern civilization, and *Russia is completely different from the countries of Western Europe* (emphasis mine—author), who insistently advocate materialistic civilization. Therefore, I very much wish to visit Soviet Russia.

Karakhan promised to cable Moscow at once to arrange an invitation for the poet, and expressed great interest in closer relations between India and Soviet Russia, then completely cut off from contact. Threading his needle with Tagore's theme that Russia belonged to the spiritual East, Karakhan continued :

From the political point of view my country is very willing to help and assist all the oppressed nations of the world, for in recent years it has suffered greatly from Western material civilization and thus there is indeed a need for joint cooperation. From the intellectual point of view Tolstoy in the nineteenth century already rejected material civilization, so that his opinion is actually in accord with the essence of Eastern spiritual civilization.⁸⁰

The two also discussed Tagore's educational ideals and agreed that they were basically the same as those of the Soviet Government.

The interview seems to have gone smoothly, and Tagore left with Karakhan's assurance that he would arrange the visit, perhaps for the following year.⁸¹

The Soviet Government readily responded to Tagore's wishes. Strangely enough, even when this invitation was renewed from year to year, on some ground or the other, Tagore, as we shall see, could not come to Soviet Russia till 1930 !

The year 1925 provided the very first opportunity. Tagore was invited to the bi-centenary celebrations of the USSR Academy of Sciences, along with Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences since 1888, Dr. Surendranath Dasgupta, eminent philosopher and historian, the famous scientist, Professor C. V. Raman of the Calcutta University, and Professor D. Modi, the known philologist.⁸²

The Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs sent a special telegram to the Soviet plenipotentiary representative in Turkey, with a directive to issue visas and extend all assistance to Tagore and other invitees.⁸³

Tagore sent a telegram of thanks :

I thank the Academy of Sciences for the invitation. Shall do everything possible to arrive for your glorious celebrations.⁸⁴

But illness prevented him from going. Whether it was only illness or something else responsible for this is difficult to say. The only person to be able to get through the 'sanitary cordon'⁸⁵ (raised in India by the British to keep the "disease" of Bolshevism off) were C. V. Raman and D. Modi.

The Indian scholars made brilliant, emotional speeches ; and appreciated greatly the achievements of Russian Indologists. Professor C. V. Raman, for instance, said :

I represent not only the Calcutta University, not only Indian science, but also the 300 million population of India—the people, who already 5,000 years back, created the greatest culture. I have travelled for 12,000 miles for carrying with me our feelings of admiration and gratitude. I thank you for your unique hospitality, and thank you still more for the study of languages, of the way of life and culture of the peoples of Asia. In vain are some people trying to hold the hand of time. Coming nearer is the time of freedom which is so essential for science⁸⁶...

Tagore's proposed visit to the USSR was almost going to materialize in 1926 at the time of his long stay in Europe.

While he was in Italy, solemn receptions were arranged in his honour. He still could not discern clearly between the sincerity of feelings of the Italian people for him and the sensational racket being created around his name by Mussolini for propagandist purposes. When later he came to know of the true state of affairs in Italy, from the Italian emigrants and from Romain Rolland, he at once wrote to the editor of the "Manchester Guardian", sharply condemning fascism.⁸⁷ The reactionary Italian newspapers immediately replaced the words of eulogies for the poet by most flagrant curses.

So thereafter Tagore visited Switzerland, France, England, and then Scandinavia where, in Stockholm, he had a meeting with A. Arosev, the distinguished Soviet diplomat and writer.⁸⁸ [He, far back in 1922, had published, in the journal "Krasnaya nov," edited by Voronsky, his review of Tagore's *The Home and the World*].⁸⁹ Tagore again conveyed to Arosev, as he had earlier to Karakhan, his ardent desire to visit Soviet Russia, the country which, in his words, he "knew and loved from his readings of her great literature".⁹⁰

Towards the end of the year, Arosev published his vivid impressions of this meeting in the journal "30 dni" [30 days]:

He had a wonderful face, with not a single wrinkle on it. The grey beard and moustache as such seemed to have

been glued, for there was no connection between their being grey and his face, without a single furrow, with good lush lips, with burning, prophetic eyes.⁹¹

Arosev recalls what Tagore told him :

You don't know how, since long, I have been wanting to be in your country which I love from her literature. And now when your people have turned an entirely new [leaf], have become completely different, from what they were earlier, as I am told by my friends [Who?—author], I am far more impatient to fly thereto.

I wish to know your music, your theatre, your dances, and acquaint myself with your literature.⁹²

Arosev reminisces on what he told Tagore :

Our whole society and the now growing youth read your works with great interest.⁹³

Arosev told Tagore that he was most welcome to Soviet Russia and talked out the details of the visit.

From Stockholm Tagore went away to Germany where, according to some reports, A. V. Lunacharsky extended to him a most cordial invitation to visit the USSR.⁹⁴ The formal invitation from the All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) was also handed over to Tagore here through diplomatic channels. It may be mentioned here that earlier, on 17 May 1926, the just established VOKS⁹⁵ had sent a circular to scientific and cultural institutions of India for organising exchanges in the field of culture. A communication had also gone to Tagore by name, explaining the aims and objects of the Society and specially stressing that one of the functions of the Society was to exchange books and academic materials.⁹⁶

The said invitation dated 27 September 1926, from VOKS, reads :

The All Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) sends fraternal greetings to the great poet and writer of India.

The peoples of the Soviet Union, on the boundary of the West and the East, and a connecting link as such between the cultures of Europe and Asia, have, for a long time and with deep sympathy, been following your literary activity.

Millions of readers in our country have experienced and feel the thoughts, feelings and the acts of heroes done at your instance. Between you and the peoples of the Soviet Union there has long been an intimacy which only the really great artists of the world are destined to have.

The Society has learnt that presently you are travelling in Europe. It is confident that it is giving expression to the feelings and thoughts of the peoples of our Union while inviting you to come to our country and to have a close personal association with our life, our struggle and work. . . The new Russia is still the only country in the world, where a bold attempt is being made to build up a society in which all should be happy and none should be deprived of his share. We are still very far from attaining our ideal, but, nonetheless, have already taken the first and most difficult steps in this direction. We already had some sorts of results. Amidst incredible difficulties we are building up not only a new economy and a new policy, but also a new culture, new literature.

We hope, you will be interested to know our constructive work more intimately. . . .

The All Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries hopes, you will accept its invitation to visit our country.

Yours sincerely

I. Maisky, Acting Chairman⁹⁷

[I. Maisky distinguished diplomat and writer. Afterwards, for many years, ambassador plenipotentiary : of USSR to England].⁹⁸

At the same time, G. Chicherin, the Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs, sent to the Soviet plenipotentiary representatives in Germany, Czechoslovakia and specially Poland a directive from the Soviet government for giving all assistance to Tagore for his travel to the USSR.⁹⁹

The telegram dated 12 October 1926 to P. L. Voikov, the ambassador plenipotentiary of USSR in Poland, reads :

Received the report from Prague about issue of visas to Rabindranath Tagore and his entourage—Professor Mahalanobis, his wife, and the journalist Ramananda

Chatterjee. I have replied that what is necessary is not just giving of visa but conveying the warm invitation from VOKS. Tagore will be received at our border—*Chicherin*.¹⁰⁰

Simultaneously, preparations began to be made in the USSR for according a most befitting reception to Tagore. The special Reception Committee formed under the chairmanship of A. V. Lunacharsky included such eminent figures of Soviet culture as V. E. Meyerhold,¹⁰¹ K. S. Stanislavsky, P. S. Kogan, M. P. Pavlovich.¹⁰² About 50 organisations in Soviet Russia got ready to give a warm reception to Tagore.¹⁰³

An extensive programme for Tagore's stay in USSR was drawn up by VOKS jointly with many scientific, social and cultural organisations. It was assumed that, besides Moscow, the poet would be received in Leningrad, Baku, Tiflis [now Tbilisi], Batum and Crimea.¹⁰⁴

Academician S. F. Ol'denburg, permanent Secretary of the USSR Academy of Sciences, published a large article on Rabindranath Tagore in the widely circulated Soviet journal "Ogonek" [Spark]¹⁰⁵

The Soviet poet, Georgii Shengeli, composed an ode to Tagore, to be read at the reception to be given to him.¹⁰⁶

The Soviet composers, L. Shtreikher, D. M. Melkikh, Al. Dzegelenik, S. N. Vasilenko, A. A. Borkhman wrote music for Tagore's songs.¹⁰⁷

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Tagore gratefully accepted the official invitation from VOKS to visit the USSR, and sent a telegram to the Soviet government stating in particular that he had known Russia for a long time and had become her admirer above all through reading her great literature.¹⁰⁸

Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya, in the second volume of his authentic biography of Rabindranath Tagore, stresses that it had been a "long standing dream of the Poet to see Russia."¹⁰⁹ And now, when, at long last, the Poet saw this dream turning into a veritable reality, he felt inspired to give interviews to correspondents of Berlin newspapers. In one of these he said most emphatically :

I am much tired from my travels [in Europe], but shall nonetheless go to Russia.

I wish to see the country of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Solov'ev...

I am already very old. Shall die soon... My sick heart refuses, does not wish to live any more. So it is necessary to rather see Russia... The great Russian people, who have created spiritual values which are a contribution to the treasure of universal civilisation, are... now on their way to a great future.¹¹⁰

The reports on the Poet's acceptance of invitation to visit Soviet Russia seriously upset some pro-British elements. "An open pressure was brought to be put on the poet to prevent him from fulfilling his wish."¹¹¹

Efforts were made to scare the Poet with fictitious 'hardships' lying in wait for him in his new venture. This was done so openly and shamelessly that this even evoked protest from the League of Struggle against Colonial Oppression which had on it such eminent representatives of the intelligentsia of Europe, America, China as Henri Barbusse, Martin Anderson Nexo etc.

In a letter sent on 13 October 1926, the League alerted the Soviet plenipotentiary representative in Berlin that some British or pro-British elements were trying to influence Tagore to refuse to visit the USSR.¹¹²

Tagore scoffingly followed all this futility of effort to obstruct his visit to the USSR. Unfortunately, it was destiny that failed him; he had a serious attack of influenza. Besides, the cold that year was too severe; and, he, against his wish, had to resign to the inevitable—to the recommendation of the physicians not to undertake the trip to such a cold country during illness.

Tagore deferred his trip. But maybe, he would have received the most efficient treatment from the most efficient doctors of Crimea. Who knows... ?

How destiny laid waste all the labour on preparations to receive Tagore! But the Soviet Union understood Tagore's position.

In January 1927 itself, as soon as it became known that Tagore was as eager as before to make his visit, the VOKS, and this time also the USSR Academy of Sciences, announced their readiness to renew the invitation to the Poet.¹¹³

In his position Tagore was to be given all opportunities to come—as a guest of government, or of the Friendship Society, or of the Academy of Sciences, or for the anniversary of the Revolution, or for Tolstoy's birth centenary, or maybe, simply as a transit passenger !

Now, in 1927, his name was, of course, included in the list of guests from abroad invited to the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Great October.¹¹⁴

But this time too Tagore could not leave India.

However, this year, Tagore gladly received a visitor from Soviet Russia at Santiniketan. On his return home, this 'visitor' published his impressions under the pseudonym "A. G-r", in the journal "Krasnaya Niva" :

On receiving my letter Tagore sent me a kind note that he was expecting me. I had a great regard for the poet as a man... He had returned to the British government all titles of honour, like 'Sir' because he did not agree with the British policy in India. Besides, I loved him for his lectures against colonialism, given by him in America...

Tagore stressed how his own ideas were different from those of Gandhi, whom, however, he greatly valued and respected.¹¹⁵

Describing the way of life at Santiniketan, the author says :

Every morning, a chorus of youth greets the rising sun, singing, sometimes coming nearer, sometimes withdrawing farther, the song of welcome to the rising sun. Their pure voices rise high for zealous singing. Every morning, the poet's words of welcome recited by these simple-hearted children, greet the new day.

The old poet ascends the stairs... he enters the hall and bends his head towards hands folded in prayer,—for a few moments, everybody seems to be lost in silent rapture. Then he lifts his face and recites verse from the Upanishads in a lofty, prolonged tone.

The audience sits in reverence : old men and women, young boys and girls in the transparent hall of glass and behind its walls through which filters the morning light.

At the time of going out, Tagore stops. The young students,—beautiful boys and girls,—and also the old men

and women pass by in a file before the fine, tall old man with the lion's mane.¹¹⁶

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The only Indian then in Soviet Russia, as we could find in the Rabindra Bhavana Archives, to write directly to Tagore at that time was Daud Ali Datta, the teacher of Bengali at the Leningrad Institute of Living Oriental Languages,—whom we already know. In his letter of 2 March 1927, Daud Ali Datta informs Tagore that he has learnt from Academician Shcherbatskoi about his (Tagore's) visit to Soviet Russia in summer. Daud Ali Datta writes of the increasing interest there in Indian life and culture, and assures him that his presence would be of real interest to the Russians :

I have much pleasure to inform you that a communique has recently been issued in the Russian press by Prof. Shcherbatskoi, member of Academy of Sciences to the effect that you intend to leave for Russia in summer next. If it be true, will you please let me know if possible when you would be able to visit this country. The news in the press has brought me several letters from my friends enquiring about your forthcoming visit to Russia...

Your presence [in Soviet Russia] would, therefore, I hope, be of much interest to the Russians.¹¹⁷

The letter is also of interest as an authentic evidence of Tagore's intention to make the trip definitely in summer of this year. But, as we know, Tagore was unable to go in summer 1927 too as he was later for the October anniversary celebrations.

But at the 10th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, in 1927, India was to be represented in a big way. The forty-two persons invited included such eminent figures of the Indian national liberation movement as Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru¹¹⁸. However, the colonial powers were determined not to allow the Indian invitees to participate in the October anniversary. Besides, the diplomatic relations between England and Soviet Union set up only in 1924, and severed this year, had made the situation still worse.¹¹⁹

Nonetheless, many Indians managed to find their way to the Soviet Union—among them Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, though they arrived in Moscow one day late, that is, only on 8 November. [They had been detained in Poland for want of German visa !]

During their stay in Moscow the Nehrus had meetings with the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of USSR, M. I. Kalinin, and with the Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs of USSR, G. V. Chicherin.¹²⁰

Later, on the basis of his personal impressions and the literature studied, J. Nehru published a series of articles on USSR in such well-known Indian papers as "Indian National Herald", "Hindu", "Bombay Chronicle". The articles were friendly in nature. Some of the articles, particularly on the achievements of USSR in the sphere of education, were published on 9, 16 and 23 August 1928 in the "Young India", the weekly edited by Mahatma Gandhi.¹²¹ All these articles were also published in the form of a book under the title *Soviet Russia* (Bombay, 1929). In this book, Nehru gave an account of the most characteristic features of achievements of the peoples of USSR in the first ten years.

This book of Jawaharlal Nehru was read with great interest by wide circles of Indian society.

One of the Indian publicists said, "J. Nehru was the first of the eminent Indians to get through the 'sanitary cordon' around the Soviet Union. Next was Rabindranath Tagore."¹²²

An high assessment of the achievements of the Soviet peoples and their self-sacrifices for the sake of their ideal was given by Mahatma Gandhi too. "I have a firm conviction," he said in his talk to the students of the Gujarat University in 1928 "that...the Bolshevist idealism has at its back the most real self-sacrifice of a great number of men and women who, for the sake of these ideals, have given all they had. The ideal glorified by the sacrifices of such an outstanding person as Lenin cannot just fail. The noble example of their self-sacrifice will be glorified for centuries."¹²³

We feel, Mahatma Gandhi's views have a semblance with what Tagore said in 1918 of the ideal of Russian Revolution.

Proceeding chronologically now to the year 1928, we find on record Rabindranath's letter in reply to Saumyendranath Tagore's who was at this time in Moscow. Judging from this document of 17 April 1928, Tagore not only was still as eager to visit the Soviet Russia as he ever had been, but also very much wanted to invite to Santiniketan a specialist who would be able to give lectures on Russian literature, music and art, though confident that the British government would simply not permit. Tagore wanted to organise a proper exchange of publications too. The letter voices Tagore's appreciation of the work of Saumyendranath in this respect, and shows his constant concern for the protection of Indian village, for which, he feels, it is essential to study the system of education of peasants as developed in Soviet Russia.

Since this letter, preserved in Moscow Archives, has not been published in original as yet, we are reproducing it here in English translation :

I am pleased to receive your letter. I am making arrangements to start for Europe. I would have been glad if I could get someone for a short time, who could teach Russian art, literature, music etc. in Santiniketan but it is impossible for our government to allow such a thing. They will be in fear of the danger of Soviet culture being spread. Besides this, it is necessary for us to know what system they have evolved in Russia in the line of educating the peasantry. We will die if we cannot save our villages. Already the process of death has started in the substratum of society. It is vitally necessary for us to know by what method Russia is instilling new life into this limb of the society. We are dissipating all our energy in barren politics whereas on the other hand the country is getting poorer and poorer in life and wealth. It is my great wish to be personally present in Russia and to see for myself the system of village-education, the cooperative movement etc. But I have not sufficient strength now. I will have to surrender myself to the hands of the doctors and be quiet for some time. Now I am 68, my light is getting dim, there is very little hope that only by manipulating the wick of the candle life will be bright—the real fact is that the oil is almost spent out. Anyhow it is my great wish to ac-

quaint myself with the present attempt in Russia before my death. If my health permits I will go.

17th April, 1928

Sd/- Rabindranath Tagore¹²⁴

Saumyendranath Tagore took the matter up with VOKS, which forthwith sent a circular letter to scientific and cultural organisations in the country to have Tagore's institution on their mailing list for despatch of publications.¹²⁵ Thus, Saumyendranath kept Tagore informed of the developments.

The year 1928 was an eventful one also in other ways. Indian newspapers and journals (as those in the whole world) were coming out with articles on Leo Tolstoy on the occasion of his birth centenary. In the Soviet Union, among other things, a 90-volume centenary edition of Tolstoy's Complete Works was taken up for publication. This edition, we may mention here, also has a mine of information for those interested in Indo-Russian cultural and literary contacts.

On 27 August 1928 VOKS sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi and R. Tagore, inviting them to Leo Tolstoy birth centenary celebrations in USSR. On 30 August the Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs also cabled the USSR plenipotentiary representative in Afghanistan, L. N. Stark, to make sure, by all possible means, that the invitees have received in time the telegraphic invitation from VOKS.¹²⁶ As can be assumed, the Indian guests were unable to get through the 'sanitary cordon' even to participate in a literary event of universal significance.

But can sanitary cordons hold the course of events? On 10 September 1928, Mahatma Gandhi did, in any case, participate in Tolstoy birth centenary celebrations at Ahmedabad.¹²⁷

It is natural that while celebrating Tolstoy's jubilee, people in even remote corners of the vast Russian lands thought also of the great Indian writer, Tagore. The friends circle of Yaroslavl' library (named after Nekrasov), for instance, sent congratulatory message to R. Tagore on his 67th birthday. The president of this circle, A. N. Lbovsky, a poet from amidst the working class, an ardent admirer of Tagore, along with the congratulations from the circle, sent a personal letter to Tagore with five picture post-cards of architectural monuments of Yaroslavl'.

Tagore had a reply sent through his secretary, A. K. Chanda. He (Tagore) sent his good wishes to the people of Yaroslavl' and promised to visit USSR as soon as he got well.¹²⁸

VOKS did not lose hopes of having Tagore in Soviet Russia and in a letter of 31 December 1928 informing Tagore about the despatch of some Soviet publications to his University, Visva-Bharati, the authorities of the VOKS again expressed the hope of welcoming the poet as and when his health permits him to undertake the journey :

For two years we have been waiting for your arrival and have not lost the hope of welcoming you in our country as soon as your health permits you to undertake the journey. We are assured, some spheres of our public and cultural life have an abiding interests in you as an artist and public figure.

Our countries are so far distant and personal contacts between the public figures of both the countries so rare that your visit to USSR will undoubtedly play a great role in bringing the two peoples more closely together. Our country always had very many admirers of your talent. Your individual books had been published in several editions but are all sold out. So when we tried to find for you a complete set, we could not succeed. We are therefore sending you only those of your works (in Russian) which we have managed to find with great efforts. We would wish to request you to give these over to the Visva-Bharati Library along with the other books we are sending you on literature and art in USSR. We would be happy to know that these publications are evoking proper interest in your Institution and further send you books you are interested in...

Saumyendranath Tagore has told us that, in one of your letters to him, you have touched upon the question of exchange of professors with Santiniketan. We welcome this idea as the first practical step on the way of bringing our countries together culturally, and would like to have from your concrete suggestions for the implementation of this idea.¹²⁹

In 1929, both VOKS and Tagore, as persistently as before, continued to look forward to this deferred visit. As Nepal

Mazumdar puts it in the third volume of his *Bharate jatiyata o antarjatiyta ebang Rabindranath* (in 6 volumes) [Nationalism and Internationalism in India and Rabindranath], the unique and the most authentic source for political and social views of Tagore :

The invitation to visit Russia was repeated several times. But the visit could not take place because of various troubles.¹³⁰

Nepal Mazumdar further mentions that, in 1929, while returning from Canada, en route to Japan, the Poet was to go via Korea to Russia (obviously, taking the trans-Siberian line), but had to postpone this journey for health reasons at the instance of his doctors.¹³¹

The doctors, again !

On 2 March 1930 Tagore set off on one of his longest, and the last trip for Europe and America. He returned to India on 30 January 1931.

He was to deliver the long pending Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, but, according to Nepal Mazumdar,¹³² one of his most important aims was 'at long last' at any cost,¹³³ to realize his dream of visiting Soviet Russia. He also had to find all possible resources for his institution Visva-Bharati.

Tagore left India at an extremely disturbed time when the whole country was determined to fight for freedom, when Mahatma Gandhi was embarking on his campaign of civil disobedience.¹³⁴

On 26 March, Tagore arrived in France and spent a month there. Here he had an exhibition of his paintings,¹³⁵ which with equally great or, may be, even greater success were later exhibited in Moscow.

From France Tagore arrived in England on 11 May 1930. Here, he was upset and "shocked to receive the news of painful happenings in India... of the arrest and internment of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawarharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders, the martial law at Sholapur, indiscriminate shootings and mass arrests all over the land..."¹³⁶

Expressing his anxiety and disgust to a representative of the "Manchester Guardian", he said :

News is trickling through travellers from India telling how cruel and arbitrary punishments are meted out to entirely inoffensive persons. Though such actions were called by the high sounding names of law and order, they are themselves the worst breaches of the law of humanity...¹³⁷

Tagore was no less disturbed by the British attitude to communal riots in Dacca, and gave vent to his anguish in a letter published later in "The Spectator" on 30 August 1930 :

At Dacca, in Eastern Bengal, there have been communal riots in which men of vicious character have been brought in, so as to increase the mischief, and unspeakable atrocities have occurred. Yet, according to reports which have reached me, the police have either stood idly by or allowed the evil to go on with indifference and contempt...these crying evils continuing from day to day in the capital city of East Bengal...have hardly found any mention in English journals. Other happenings had shaken public confidence, but this has struck at its foundation.¹³⁸

How deeply he loves his country and his countrymen, how he prays for India is illustrated by his following poem published in "Modern Review" just before his visit to Russia :

What is my longing, my dream, my prayer,
for my country, my beloved India ?
I dream of her. I fervently pray for her, that she may
no longer be in bondage to strangers. But that
she may be free !
Free to follow her own high ideals :
Free to accomplish her own important mission in the
world :
Free to fill her own God-given place among the great
Nations.¹³⁹

The Hibbert lectures at Oxford nonetheless went off smoothly. These were published in one of his best philosophical books *The Religion of Man*.¹⁴⁰ The lectures were indeed brilliant ; and at Oxford, Sir Michael Sadler even said :

We shall never forget in Oxford the gift you have given us and the inspiration you have brought to us.¹⁴¹

The deep philosophical thoughts did in no way draw Tagore away from the harsh realities of the day. On 22 May, speaking in Birmingham, at the George Cadbury Memorial Hall, on the theme of "Civilisation and Progress",¹⁴² Tagore again, as he had earlier in his *Nationalism*, expressed his repugnance to the contemporary Western civilisation :

The Society, which should have music in its voice and beauty in its limbs, becomes under a prolific *greed* like an overladen market car, grinding and creaking on the road that leads from things to nothing, tearing ugly ruts across the green life until it breaks down with its own vulgarity, reaching nowhere.¹⁴³

In this lecture, he recognised that the West had made enormous progress, but, this progress, he opined, was undermining man :

The explosive force of the bomb has developed its mechanical power of wholesale destruction to a degree that could be represented in the past only by the personal valour of a large number of men. But such enormous progress has made man diminutive...[In spite of] the bigness of the results and mechanical perfection...*the man in him has been smothered*.¹⁴⁴

In the background of this humiliation and undermining of man in the Western society Tagore, as we shall see, all the more appreciated the awakening up of the wide masses in the Soviet Union.

From England, Tagore arrived in Berlin on 11 July. He was very well received by the people of Germany ; and the exhibition of his paintings there evoked enthusiastic response.¹⁴⁵

Besides Berlin, Tagore was also received in Munich, Dresden and other cities of Germany.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, as seen from a rare photograph published by Nepal Mazumdar in the third volume of his aforesaid book, Tagore even visited the Ho'stein Communist Camp at the invitation of the Camp In-charge.¹⁴⁷ We feel, he was already preparing himself for his forthcoming visit to Soviet Union.

In Berlin, before 17 July, Tagore met A. V. Lunacharsky who invited him to come to USSR. The details of the meeting are not presently available ; we find only a reference to it in a

letter of 31 July 1936 from Amiya Chakravarty to VOKS. The letter is preserved in the USSR Archives.¹⁴⁸

From Germany Tagore set off for Switzerland, and arrived in Geneva on 19 August. Here he met Romain Rolland, and took rest.

Again here, his "pro-British friends"¹⁴⁹ made desperate efforts to dissuade him unto the last from going to Soviet Russia. Tagore was warned of the "complexities" and the length of the journey, and also of the "secretive character" of Bolsheviks etc. etc. He was told that the journey would turn out to be fatal for him, because his mellow years and bad state of health would not withstand the "horrible conditions of food and lack of proper facilities for rest."¹⁵⁰

But this time Tagore knew what to do. With the situation at home consistently deteriorating, as we already mentioned, and in his resolve to seek out all possible means to help out his country, he stood firm in his decision.

Now we come back to his visit to Soviet Russia. We should say here that Tagore was supposed to stay in the Soviet Union not for two weeks but for over a month, up to the end of October 1930. The programme included, besides Moscow, visits to Leningrad, Crimea and Caucasus. Tagore was to leave the Soviet Union via Siberia, and, as he planned, go to Japan and then the USA.¹⁵¹

The first impressions in the Soviet Union were very strong. Quite new. These intensified day by day. The Poet felt very inspired, rather tired—the programme was overloaded, everybody wanted to see him.

The Soviet doctors, with their sincere concern for his health, suggested that he should not tire himself such a lot.¹⁵² Knowing how much more there was for him, Tagore decided to curtail his visit.

And now we return to the Soviet train which was carrying Tagore to the land of his dreams. The train had already crossed the border town of Negoreloye, and was fast approaching Smolensk.¹⁵³

As Amiya Chakravarty reminisces :

At many stations on our way there were crowds and crowds to see Tagore—peasants, merchants, teachers... especially at Smolensk. Tagore greeted them with joined palms in the traditional Indian fashion and we all felt happy that even such sweet encounters took place. The landscape was mostly wide fields, farms and occasional towns and market places.¹⁵⁴

I particularly remember the flights of swans seen when nearing the city of Smolensk—a lively scene, a mixture of town and country life. I felt, it was all as in our own country—satiated, though poor villages. And then, gradually moving towards Moscow, the impression of a vast city! How, arriving at the White-Russian Baltic Station, we were all filled with wonder! Crowds of countless spectators; a reception meeting to greet the world famous poet; a caravan of motor cars to the Grand Hotel! A normal hotel, as if of the Victoria age—the poet has written of this in his *Letters from Russia*. All our hours brought us joy, thrill, courtesy.¹⁵⁵

Amiya Chakravarty further reminisces that “at the Grand Hotel dignitaries met Tagore and full programme of his engagements was given to him.”¹⁵⁶

Now we shall give a day to day account of his stay in Moscow. We also shall quote important passages from the minutes of the meetings Tagore had with Soviet officials and public as preserved in the USSR Archives and for the first time published in 1961 by the Soviet scholar L. S. Gamayunov.¹⁵⁷

On 11 September 1930 the Poet and his team were received at the White-Russian Baltic Station by the representatives of the USSR Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (D. Novomirsky, Chief, Anglo-American Section; A. Eshukov, Chief, Exhibition Department and M. Dobin, Chief, Foreign Reception Bureau) and by the members of the Moscow Writers' Association (the author Alekseev, the eminent poetess, Vera Inber¹⁵⁸ and others).¹⁵⁹

On 12 September 1930 at 12 noon, a reception was arranged in the VOKS building. The Chairman of the Society, Professor

F. N. Petrov, explained the aims and objects of the new experiments in the USSR.

Tagore was accompanied by his secretaries.

Welcoming Tagore, Professor Petrov says that it is a great inspiration to find that the Poet takes such interest in the new civilisation in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁰

Expressing his thanks for the cordial welcome Tagore says :

You are making a tremendous experiment in this country...I cannot help expressing my admiration for your courage, for your keen enthusiasm to build up your social structure on the equitable basis of human freedom. ;It is wonderful to feel that *you are interested not merely in your national problems but in the good of humanity as a whole* (emphasis mine—author).

By offering education to vast multitude of your people, who were imprisoned in the darkness of ignorance, millions of human beings who were obliged to yield to exploitation and oppression in order to preserve their precarious existence, you have made an invaluable contribution to human progress. *You are creating a new world of humanity* (emphasis mine—author) and for the first time in history acknowledging the scheme of practical work.¹⁶¹

We see that Tagore right at the outset, expressing his admiration for the attainments of the Soviet people, specially appreciated their courage, enthusiasm and concern not only for their own country but for whole mankind.

Then, Tagore conveyed his keen interest in the education of the masses, specially peasants. This, he said, is to him most important because, in his social activity, he devotes much time to this aspect.

Petrov in his turn stresses the importance of economic factors for spreading mass education. Tagore agrees.

We reproduce here some extracts from their first talk : [Here, and later, the words in italics are ours, until otherwise mentioned].

Petrov : We believe, that the spread of mass education can only be possible under suitable economic conditions...

Tagore : That is true. No aspect of life can in reality be deducted from another. Education is necessarily connected with economic problems...

I, as an educationist, am concerned vitally with all the great movements you have initiated for the good of peasant masses... If we can learn from your experiences in this line, we shall be able to grapple with rural problems in India in an efficient manner.

Petrov : Our first educational weapon is to launch an intensive campaign in the villages directed to make the peasants conscious of their own dignity, of their inherent rights of which they had been deprived for so long and of all the possibilities that life opens to them... All the store-houses of wisdom, of joy, of well ordered social benefits are open to every one of us because everyone of us has equal human rights to them.

Tagore : I have come to study your educational methods, to draw strength from the atmosphere of creative efforts which surround you... whatever you can show me... of your educational work will be of a very great use to me indeed... *I shall do all that I can to utilize my visit to your country.*

Concluding the conversation, Petrov said :

Sir, your name is known and loved in the whole of Russia. We have over 25 current volumes of your works, and a vast public reads them. We shall be only too happy and proud to show you whatever you want to see of our work, and we feel sure you will appreciate our educational activities.¹⁶²

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In the evening, at 8 p.m., Tagore was awaited eagerly at the Writers' Club at an evening arranged in his own honour, by the Association of Unions of Soviet Writers of R.S.F.S.R.¹⁶³

Some 60 eminent writers, litterateurs and representatives of academic-pedagogical circles of the capital were invited to this evening, it having an exclusive and intimate character. Among the guests were the well-known poet N. Aseev¹⁶⁴ (close adherent of Vladimir Mayakovsky), the poetess Vera Inber, the well-known writer Fedor Gladkov¹⁶⁵ (who wrote the much-talked-of *Cement*), N. Ognev¹⁶⁶ (author of *Diary of Kostya Ryabtsev*), Albert Rhys Williams,¹⁶⁷ and also Madame Litvinova,¹⁶⁸ and many others.¹⁶⁹

In his welcome address the Chairman of the VOKS, F. N. Petrov said :

We are happy to see the great poet and thinker, Rabindranath Tagore amongst us. Tagore is not only a writer and philosopher but also an outstanding stalwart of public education. This has brought him to our country. He wants to know how we, in different social and economic conditions, are building up the human personality. We are happy when our friends come to our country to see our work with their own eyes. Many false things are said and written about us. Monstrous rumours are spread. To this we say : 'Come and see...' We feel, Rabindranath Tagore will, as always, thoughtfully assess all that he sees and give out to the whole world his opinion about our country, our work.¹⁷⁰

Welcome speeches were also made by the Rector of the 2nd Moscow State University, Professor A. P. Pinkevich ; the President of the State Academy of Arts, Professor P. S. Kogan,¹⁷¹ also an eminent critic ; and by the Soviet writer Shklyar, the latter speaking on behalf of the Moscow Writers Association.¹⁷²

In his reply Tagore *inter alia* said :

I thank you for the honour you have done me in inviting me to your country and also to this feast this evening where I have had the opportunity of meeting with some of the greatest representatives of intellectual life in your country.

I have come to this country to learn. I want to know how you are solving in your country the great problem : the world problem of civilisation. Civilisation today has taken man far away... It has torn individual personality away from society. Modern civilisation has given birth to an extraordinarily artificial life ; it has created diseases, evoked specific sufferings and given rise to many anomalies... Under modern civilisation the human personality is imprisoned in a cage, shut off from the rest of society. *In your country you have put an end to this evil.*

I have heard from many and I am beginning myself to be convinced, *that your ideas are very much like my own dream for a full life for the individual, for complete edu-*

cation. In your country you are not only giving the individual scientific education, you are making of him a *creative personality*. In this way you are realizing the greatest, the highest ideal of humanity. For the first time in history you are giving the hidden wealth of the human mind a chance to express itself. I thank you for this with all my heart... I also realize that it will be an immortal gift to humanity from your country, this idea of education for everybody...

I offer you my heartiest thanks for giving me this great opportunity to learn from you about your pioneer work in the field of people's education.¹⁷³

We see that in his second speech in USSR, Tagore, condemning again the ills of modern civilisation stresses that these ills have been done away with in Soviet Russia. He also states that the ideal of complete education of the individual for making of him a creative personality is very near and dear to him. For all this, he offers his heartfelt thanks.

The evening was concluded with a concert, performed by the best artists—the soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre and the ensemble of Oriental singers and dancers.

The individuals taking part included Tsiganov, a young talented violinist, 26 years of age, who gave a recital of Gluck, Shchubert and some Hungarian national folk songs; the baritone, Sodomov, who sang some Russian folk songs and a piece from the new Soviet opera "Son of the Sun", the famous Soviet harp-player, Miss Erdely (an artist emeritus of the Republic), who gave a recital of the world renowned Russian folk song "Volga" and of "Ario" from Faust; Barsova (an artist emeritus of the Republic) and a leading Soprano singer of the Moscow Bolshoi Opera House, who sang pieces from different operas. The Ensemble of Oriental singers and dancers exhibited the musical art of the Caucasian Republics. (This Ensemble is famous throughout the Soviet Union for their excellent execution of the folk dances and songs of the Daghestan Republic).¹⁷⁴

Thus ended the second day of Tagore's visit and the first of hectic engagements. A day of quite new impressions!

And left to his own solitude, Tagore painted. Impressions of Moscow? Who knows?¹⁷⁵

On 13th September, Tagore was the host.

Right in the morning, he received Professor Petrov and had a most friendly talk with him. This time, the talk was obviously confidential.

Tagore spoke about the inflamed atmosphere in India, having all the signs of a revolution in the making. He stressed that he had to be very cautious there so that there are no reprisals on Santiniketan, a major work of his life. If the colonial powers have the slightest suspicion of a person having anything to do with the USSR, he is sure to land in jail. Indeed! As already said, even Gandhiji and Nehru were arrested during this year.

Petrov assured Tagore that nothing of what he says will be published without his consent, and that everything will be done to save him from any compromising situation and help him in his noble mission.

Tagore knew, the Soviet people will not fail him.

We know, the Soviet press did not publish his conversation with L. Karakhan in 1924. His talk of 13 September 1930 with Petrov also has been published in USSR only in 1961. It is possible, there is much more to it, still unpublished, because Tagore wanted it to be so.

In fact, there is much of Tagore and Russia—forgotten, unknown, undiscovered... And, as Amiya Chakravarty rightly said recently, "*the subject is vast and multi-faceted ; putting it down comes to a [whole] 'Mahabharata'.*"¹⁷⁶

Here are some excerpts from the minutes of the talk between Tagore and Petrov :

Tagore : The most trivial thing can create complications for me and be a cause of misfortune for my institution [Visva-Bharati].

Petrov : We shall not take even a single step which could harm you personally and your institution. On the other hand, this cause is so dear to us that we shall do everything for it, if needed.

Tagore : India is now in a state of revolution. A fight is going on between the Government and the people. In such an atmosphere the most innocent thing, far removed from all politics, is construed as propaganda, as a secret, camouflaged form of aid to revolution. You know how the British Government treated those people who were sus-

pected of having connections with you. They were arrested and are now lodged in jails.¹⁷⁷

Thereafter, the talk switched over to possibilities of enlarging the scope of contacts between the Soviet academic and cultural institutions and Santiniketan, which Saumyendranath Tagore had taken up with VOKS a couple of years earlier :

Petrov : When I suggested establishing links between [your] Institute and our institutions, I had in mind only the inter-flow of information and mutual assistance to the cause of education of human personality. Despite the difference in our views, our method of achieving the aims set, the ultimate ideal, is quite the same. We, for our ideological tasks, agree in one thing—namely, that the ultimate end of any ideal pedagogue is to create a harmoniously developed personality both physically as well as intellectually. Here we can learn a lot from each other. If the conditions in India are such that these links between [your] Institute and our institutions cannot be established at the moment, we can only be sorry for this and wait for changed circumstances.

I know, your visit to us can evoke all sorts of, maybe wrong interpretations. I would personally be very sorry if this intensely cultural visit which is so extremely pleasant to us, results in any unpleasant consequences for you personally or for the cultural educational institutions you run and are associated with. I think, in a country which persecutes all expressions of free thought, and always finds reasons for accusing a person who wishes to have his own thoughts, his own opinion and does not submit to traditional routine views...

Tagore : But what you could really do for our working people is to write to us in our language about your achievements, about what you have been able to do for the people who everywhere, in all countries, are oppressed and rejected. And you have achieved quite a lot. The giving out of information about your education system would be most beneficial to the working people of our country.

In America I read a book devoted to questions of education in USSR. The book was written by an American woman. *It gave me the first idea of how education works*

in the USSR, and made a very strong impression on me. Since then I have been an admirer of your system of education. This book inspired me and showed that there was much in common between the dream of my life and what you are doing. Maybe, there are more books which describe various aspects of your construction—economic, social and cultural-educational. I would very much wish to have them, and if they are available, I shall be very grateful. I tried to get these books ; but as always happens in such cases, they did not reach me even once : where there is something about Soviet principles, it never reaches. Your English publications will be of great interest for me.

Petrov : I believe, you could select the publications needed.

At the end Petrov asked Tagore if they could fix some lectures for him, but Tagore did not wish so.

Petrov : For organising your lectures, we would like to know the theme of the lecture, what sort of people, you think, it would be desirable to invite and would be able to understand the lecture, and when could we possibly do it.

Tagore : I do not like [giving] lectures. I would prefer rather to read something from my works...I would read for 30-35 minutes because I would like the rest of the time to be taken up by something else—declamation or music.

Petrov : We shall do that.¹⁷⁸

* * *

At noon, Tagore received representatives of Moscow students and professors.

Greeting Tagore, the President of the Central Bureau of Proletarian students spoke of the popularity in Soviet Union of the greatest poet of India, and of the vast interest the Soviet students had in the ancient culture of the Indian people. He requested Tagore to convey [to his countrymen] that the Soviet students sympathise with the liberation struggle of the working people of India against imperialist oppression.¹⁷⁹

Being asked how in his School he combined education with the realities of life, Tagore replied :

I have selected a beautiful place far from the humdrum of the city life, for I myself grew in the city, in the centre of India, in Calcutta, and ever aspired and pined for some far-off place where my heart, my soul were really free. Though I had no experience of life outside the city, deep inside me, I all the time dreamt of escaping from the confines of these walls, from the huge step-mother like Calcutta with its heart of stone. I felt, I was starving for the mother-nature, and so chose a place where the sky was immensely and infinitely pure to the very horizon. This, was a place where a man could freely dream and where the colours of the seasons of the year, all that is living and beautiful, penetrates unchecked into the very depths of human essence.

There I gathered around me a few children and started teaching them. I was their friend. I sang for them, composed music, operas, plays in which they took part. I read my writings to them, and this was the beginning of my school. At that time there were five or six students in the school. . . . tried my best to have certain things in the school which they did not have in the orthodox schools. The teachers shared the common life with the boys, it was a community life. In the sports and festivals the teachers and the students fully cooperated with each other.

On being asked if there were in India any institutions for training workers for literary activity, Tagore said :

Thus, we hardly have any school for giving education to peasants or workers with a view to making them literate in their field. The only exception, I can say, is the school which I opened in a neighbouring village, not far from my school. There simple peasants receive the education essential, true education, and not simply superficial knowledge in the field of some elementary disciplines.¹⁸⁰

The same afternoon, Tagore received the Director of the State Tretyakov Art Gallery, Professor M. P. Kristi, the art critic, Professor A. A. Sidorov from Museum of Fine Arts, a representative of Glavnauka [State Organisation for Management of Science], the Head of the Exhibition Section of VOKS, Eshukov, and the Head of the Museum Section of People's Commissariat of Education, A. A. Val'ter.

Tagore showed them his paintings and *eskize* (sketches) done in water colours.

Greeting Tagore, Professor M. P. Kristi said in particular :

We all know Rabindranath Tagore well as a philosopher and a writer but it was for us a pleasant surprise to know that he is also a painter. We shall, with particular pleasure and joy, arrange an exhibition of his works for introducing these to our intelligentsia and masses at large.¹⁸¹

In response, Tagore expressed his thanks for the greetings and the words of appreciation, and said :

All that we have—the best creations of my country—are also yours ; and all the best created by you is for the who'e mankind.

I shall be only too glad to show you what I have done in this latest manifestation of my own creative mind... I want. .to know what you think of my attempts, because *I value your opinion of art very highly indeed.*

I have felt a need to bring my pictures to you also because through pictures I can come into direct touch with your mind. I cannot do this with my words owing to the barrier of language. But my pictures, they will speak to you without the medium of an interpreter.

We reproduce here extracts from conversations between Tagore and Soviet art critics :

Question : What is the meaning of this picture ?

Tagore . There is no idea in it. This is on'y a picture, ideas are in words, and not in life.

Art Critic : What is remarkable in your work is the spirit of youth, and that is why these paintings are so interesting. The spirit of youth meets no difficulty in finding its proper mode of expression and your pictures have created their own technique.

Question : Have you ever painted before ?

Tagore : Never.

Art Critic : You are a first-class artist. Every new picture makes a stronger impression and the entire audience is thrilled by this...

Question : Something resembling very much the works of *Vrubel*¹⁸², whom you have never seen perhaps...

Tagore : I do not believe I have seen any of his pictures.

Art Critic : We shall be glad to show them to you.

Another Art Critic : We shall be glad to take your paintings and exhibit them as our own—as those of a Russian artist !...

Question : We ask whether your paintings have any names ?

Tagore : None at all. I cannot think of any names. I do not know how to describe my pictures.

Question : Is this your portrait ?

Tagore : Yes, this is my portrait. I have also more. I am afraid, I am taking your time.

Art Critic : We would very much like to see the others.

Question : Is this a portrait of Dante ?

Tagore : ...No, it is not a portrait of Dante. I did it on the steamer on my way from Japan ; last year my pen followed its own impulse which led to this figure you see before you.

Art Critic : (With regard to a picture made the day before). An impression of Moscow ?

Tagore : Well, I did it yesterday. I do not know if Moscow has anything to do with it—perhaps it may be so, who knows ?

Art Critic : We wish to express our deep pleasure.

Tagore : It gives me great delight to be able to gain your approbation and to know that this came from the expert critics and artists of your land...

Art Critic : We very much want to express our admiration, but we would not like to tire you. When this Exhibition opens, the visitors will tell you all they feel. For the Exhibition we should like to have some catalogue type of thing.

We would [also] wish to have a foreword [to this catalogue], written specially for our country in memory of your visit.

Tagore : All right. I shall do that.

Art Critic : For the Exhibition we very much wish you to prepare a tentative plan for display of your paintings.

Tagore : I believe, these could be classified under some groups as you see fit.

Art Critic : We are happy to hear it, and agree.

Tagore : I have done my job. Now it is your turn—to arrange the Exhibition.

Art Critic : We thank you once again...¹⁸³

In the evening, at 7.30 p.m., the Poet and his party attended the 2nd Moscow Art Theatre and saw the play "Peter the First". The poet was received at the theatre entrance by the Director of the theatre, G. G. Aleksandrov, and the leading actors S. V. Giatsintova, S. G. Birman and B. A. Podgornyi. Tagore liked the performance ; and in the Visitors' Book wrote out his great appreciation of the play. He spoke enthusiastically about the fervour of dramatic power with which the whole play was performed.¹⁸⁴

For 14 September, we have no information on Tagore's appointments right up to late that day.

But in the evening, he, in his own words, had the most impressive visit to the first Pioneer Commune of Orphaned Children (known as 'Alice Kingina Commune of Young Pioneers') at No. 25, Tovarishchsky pereulok, Tsigansky ploshched' [Gypsy Square].¹⁸⁵

In the Visitors' Book of the Commune the Poet wrote :

I shall always remember the wonderful evening I spent with the pioneers. They taught me much which would be of great use for my own people in India and I'm grateful to them. I sympathise with all my heart with these young builders of the destiny of their people and wish them all success.¹⁸⁶

Again, in a statement to the Correspondent of the newspaper "Izvestiya", published in the paper on 16 September, he said :

What I saw today has been of immense benefit to me. I shall tell about it in India. Now I understand what you are achieving, and I have deep sympathy for your aspirations.¹⁸⁷

When, just before the Poet's departure from Moscow, a reporter from "Izvestiya" asked him what things in Moscow had impressed him the most, he replied :

The orphans at the Home of the Young Pioneers showed great confidence in their ability to realize their ideal for a new world. Their behaviour to me was so natural. Their conduct impressed me very deeply.¹⁸⁸

To the pioneers the visit came unexpected. As reminisces Aleksandr Filatov, then a young orphan pioneer who welcomed Tagore, and now a well-known poet, "We were told unexpectedly that India's poet Rabindranath Tagore was coming to see the Pioneers' Commune. We were not at all ready for this, and could not decide how to receive him best."¹⁸⁹ Still, the Pioneers immediately set to work, and started preparing a wall magazine. One of the girl pioneers who knew English translated a poem of Tagore into Russian for this wall magazine. As Professor Fedor N. Petrov later recalled, Tagore was greatly touched to see this.¹⁹⁰

Of course, for all the young pioneers who were then there, Tagore's visit left life-long impressions.

On reaching the staircase of the Commune building, the Poet was greeted by songs sung by Pioneers, the boys and girls standing in line on both sides of the steps and joining in the chorus. After the Poet had taken his seat in the central hall, a young pioneer girl of fourteen read a message of welcome in English. Then the Poet was shown round.¹⁹¹

Filatov continues his reminiscences :

Having shown the guest round, the children seated him in an armchair in the Pioneers' Hall. They surrounded him in a circle and a hearty talk began. Now we had a chance to have a good look at the poet. We were charmed with his appearance. His high, clear forehead, expressive eyes, handsome face without a single wrinkle—all bespoke his wisdom, his great thoughts and deeds... We showed him our amateur production, *The Five-Year Plan*, performed an original comic sketch about the usefulness of creches. Then we invited the poet to our dining-room and treated him to our dinner.¹⁹²

Tagore said :

My friends, I am deeply touched by the warm welcome you have accorded to me. As I look at your bright young faces full of hope and a glorious future, I feel stirred to my depths and know that the purpose of my visit to Russia is realized. For, believe me, I have come here, not so much to see what you have done and are doing now, which is great, *but to visualize the future which you are creating with such fervour for the welfare of the whole of humanity . . .* I thank you warmly for your reception, and I assure you that I feel very happy indeed to be here with you this evening.¹⁹³

The Soviet children had accepted Tagore as the most intimate friend, as their own. They didn't at all feel shy of him. This simplicity of their hearts had touched Tagore to the inmost recesses.¹⁹⁴

There is no dearth of details of this evening in the *Letters from Russia* itself and in other sources freely available.

No need here of any further elaboration.

On 15 September, the most important appointment of Tagore was with a top ranking official of the Soviet government—with the Deputy Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs of USSR, L. M. Karakhan. Possibly, Saumyendranath Tagore was with him because, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., all other members of the group except him visited the Children's creche and kindergarten of the Dynamo Works.¹⁹⁵

At 7.30 p.m., the Poet and his party visited the Union Cinema Association (*Soyuzkino*) and were received by Mr. Rutin, Chairman of the Union. "The Poet was shown excerpts from S. Eisenstein's famous Russian films "Battleship Potemkin" and "The Old and the New".¹⁹⁶ Later, the members of the Cinema Board had a conversation with Tagore concerning the Poet's new film-stories of which they had heard. They were deeply impressed by the short versions of the stories by the Poet and they decided to meet him at his hotel and discuss in detail the possibilities of filming his stories.

Such a possibility had perhaps been explored even before Tagore's visit to Soviet Russia. According to an Indian press

report, the studio of the great Russian film Director Sergei Eisenstein had plans to bring out a screen version of a story of Tagore.¹⁹⁷

On 16 September, the Soviet newspaper "Izvestiya" came out with a big article on Tagore. The article gave a vivid picture of Tagore, of his aims and moods :

Tall and somewhat stooping, with a grey beard and long hair, with soft, tender, delicate tinted hands, in priestly looking robes, he sat amidst us, listened to our greetings with half-closed eyes...He wanted to learn everything about our life, our literature, about our cultural construction. The only thing that stops him is that he is not as strong as used to be.

This marvellous guest from a distant land has overcome his age, his old age weakness, the vast distances, the hardships of travel, and has come to us to know, to see with his own eyes how the new man is being formed in new conditions, hitherto unknown to the world.¹⁹⁸

At 3 o'clock Tagore visited the Central Peasants' House and talked to collective farmers and individual peasants staying there.

On his arrival he was received in the main club-room by the Superintendent of the House, and by the House Council. Then a meeting was arranged with about 150 peasant inmates, the representatives of the nearest and the far-distant points of the Soviet Union.

At the meeting the Superintendent told the peasants that the poet had come to talk to them, and learn about them.

Then the Superintendent greeted the poet on behalf of the assembled peasants, and hoped that the first meeting between the great Indian Poet and the Soviet peasants would lay the foundation for a still deeper contact between the peasant masses of both countries.¹⁹⁹

In his brief reply the Poet emphasized the importance and significance of the strenuous work being carried on by the peasants and workers of the Soviet Russia in the building up of a new life, a new humanity. He expressed his admiration for the great spirit of good will that inspired this new effort, this

great undertaking which demanded *the utmost self-sacrifice and self-denial* on the part of the Soviet population.²⁰⁰

Then there was a session of questions and answers between the Poet and the peasants.

This session with the peasants was very important to Tagore, and he had been looking forward to it. We know that he had always believed that the future of India would depend on how the agrarian problem was solved. And this is why the experience of the USSR, that of collectivisation in particular, as we know, had been captivating his attention for a long time.

Tagore had to know how the peasants, both individual and collective farmers, themselves understood the collective management.

He put questions ; and the peasants, both individual and collective farmers, not only willingly and happily answered, but also themselves put questions. As soon as the Poet's questions became clear to them, they gave precise though detailed replies—the advantages of collectivisation were quite explicit to them. In passing they also related what difficulties were faced in the process of collectivisation and how these were solved.

In the course of the talk Tagore was convinced that the peasants, both the individuals and collective farmers, supported the idea of collectivisation. Besides, he knew how hard it was, even when mentally clear to them, to get rid of the age-old attachment to personal property. As he said, "those who possess higher means than this are great : they do not care for property. They do not regret to lose everything. But for an ordinary mortal, personal property is the language of his individuality ; he is struck dumb, as it were, if he loses it."²⁰¹ He noticed the enthusiasm of the peasants and also how much they had grown spiritually during the years of the Soviet power. "I saw with my own eyes how the Russian peasants have left the Indian peasantry behind in less than a decade. Not only have they learnt to read books ; they are transformed mentally²⁰² : they have become men", said Tagore.

Question : Have you written anything about the peasants in your works ? . . .

Tagore : Not only have I written about peasants but I am working among them, endeavouring, as far as I can,

to educate them. I am not only educating children in my schools, but also carrying on this work in the surrounding villages. This work is, of course, of a modest nature in comparison with *the gigantic educational work that is being carried on in the Soviet Union.*

Question : Had you heard before of the existence of the Peasants' Houses and of their work ?

Tagore : No, only since my coming to Moscow have I learnt of the existence of these welfare centres for the peasants.

... Now I would like to hear from you your own opinion about collectivization and its full significance for the agricultural population...

Peasants from all sorts of areas of USSR—from Ukraine, Tambov province, Siberia, Caucasus, Bashkiria, Kirghizia—told Tagore in detail about the advantages of collective cultivation of land, and about a few difficulties faced in the process of collectivisation. The problem of what family life will be like in future was also touched.

One of those present cried out : “How can we regret changing from our former small, dirty huts to our present large, sanitary, hygienic, collectivist houses ?”

A young Caucasian woman said, “I would leave my home, my children, all that I have, in order to be able to work amongst your people and to help them !”

The meeting terminated with the singing of “The International”.²⁰³

Later, in an interview to “Izvestiya” on 25 September, Tagore summarising his impressions of the meeting with peasants, said :

At the Peasants' House I met the peasants. We questioned each other quite frankly. Their problems are similar to those of the peasants in my own country. I was deeply impressed by the attitude of mind of your peasants.²⁰⁴

Tagore was probably this day visited by the distinguished Soviet educationist, S. T. Shatsky who had developed the sys-

tem of experimental schools and kindergartens for practical education of the children. Shatsky presented to the poet a number of books written by him on various problems of education, which are to this day available in the Central Library of the Visva Bharati University.²⁰⁵

On 17 September, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mr. Ariam visited the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy—the oldest, and largest higher educational institution of Russia for agriculture.²⁰⁶

At 3 p.m. the exhibition of paintings of the Poet was opened at the State Moscow Museum of New Western Art by Prof. Petrov. In his inaugural speech he stated that Rabindranath Tagore was not only a great poet and philosopher, but also an outstanding painter of the day: “We particularly appreciate his visit,”—continued Prof. Petrov,—“because he is a man of great vision and of deep intuitive understanding of life’s essential realities.”

Prof. A. A. Sidorov spoke on the essence of Tagore’s creative art as a painter.

Professor Etingof expressed his warmest welcome on behalf of the Peoples’ Commissariat of Education. The Exhibition was attended by representatives of all art and educational institutions of Moscow. The large hall was overcrowded, but still the organisers were compelled to permit another 300 and odd people to enter as they were too eager to see the Poet’s paintings.

The Exhibition was daily visited by over 500 persons on an average. (The normal average attendance is about 150 per day).²⁰⁷

We have at our disposal reminiscences of contemporary Soviet poet Severtsev, one of the translators of Tagore’s poems into Russian, who, in his childhood, had the occasion of visiting the Exhibition of Tagore’s paintings. Though he was only six at that time, his child’s heart received impressions for a whole life-time, and we here reproduce passages from his reminiscences published quite recently:

I saw myself and my father, a young artist of the time, passing along darkened rooms and corridors which I know now were those of the Museum of Modern Western Art. I was six at the time and my father led me by the hand and we both looked at some pictures (I knew they were water-colours) with strange (as it seemed to me at the

time) images. There were intricately entwined snakes with women's heads, a fanciful bird with a beak full of sharp teeth, sombre shrouded figures of harbingers of evil...

I remember quite distinctly the uneasy impression that those drawings made on me. It seemed to me that I recognised some of my strange dreams in many of the pictures.

My feeling of alarm intensified. I had been told that I was going to see the man who had drawn these enigmatic pictures...whom people talked so much about in September 1930...

I remember him sitting in a large black leather armchair very straight with both hands on the arm-rests. This serene and stately man put me immediately at ease...

I was led up to him with Alexei Sidorov...holding me by the hand on one side and my father on other...with such caution as though I was sick and the old man, a saint, was going to heal me...

The thing that etched itself in my memory was that the face was young where the eyes looked a thousand years old. His olive-skinned face was not old, but expressed will-power like the face of a warrior before a just battle...

But his eyes...it seemed there were no misfortunes, calamities and sufferings left on earth that these tired eyes had not seen myriads of times. Yet behind their bitter fatigue there was an irrepressible will...the will to suffer again and again if need be and also to struggle.

I stood still looking into those eyes for what seemed ages but in reality were probably only a few seconds. Then he freed his long, thin and sunburnt hand out of the folds of his loose sleeve and touched my left shoulder with two fingers...then I was taken aside and I cannot remember the rest...

To this day and probably to the day I die, I will remember the look of Tagore's eyes...Many have been the times when in the darkest moments of my life, in the grim war years...I have remembered that gaze—it filled my heart with fresh strength and faith in life.²⁰⁸

This day at 7.30 Tagore visited the famous 1st Moscow Art Theatre, theatre of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko, where he saw the adaptation of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. Here, the Poet had a conversation with one of the famous Soviet actresses Ol'ga Knipper-Chekhova, the widow of the famous Russian writer, Anton Chekhov.²⁰⁹

The performance no doubt made the Poet recall how in his own younger days he had written a short story *Vicharak* [The Judge] having like accents, learning later that Tolstoy had written a whole novel on the theme. He was deeply impressed to see how such a literary piece was evoking the interest not simply of the cultured people but also of plain, common masses who seemed not simply to enjoy but also to grasp it. Later, in a letter, the Poet observed : "...they listened to it with deep attention. One cannot imagine Anglo-Saxon peasants and workers enjoying it so calmly and peacefully until the small hours of the morning, let alone our people."²¹⁰

For 18 September, the only information available is that the Deputy Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs, L. M. Karakhan, invited Tagore, at 5 p.m.,—along with his companions, to his house for a friendly conversation at tea. Tagore's nephew, Saumyendranath Tagore, was also present on special invitation.²¹¹ [It may be observed here that it was not the general practice].

On 19 September, in the morning, at 9, Rabindranath Tagore left for the summer villa of L. M. Karakhan in the outskirts of Moscow.²¹² So far as we know, there is no such precedence of foreign dignitaries invited to stay at a summer-house of a high government official.

This was done apparently to give sufficient rest to the Poet, far from the din of the capital city, and in an environment something like his own at Santiniketan.

Here, the Poet got the leisure to write his first letters.

What this place was like we learn from the Poet's own very first letter written to Rani Mahalanobis (the wife of famous Professor Mahalanobis) :

A palace in the suburb of Moscow. Through the window I can see the woodland stretching to the horizon : waves of green break in on all sides—deep and light green,

green tinged with mauve, and yellow tinted green. In the far distance, on the outskirts of the wood, stands the row of cottages of the hamlet. It is nearly ten o'clock : masses of clouds have gathered in the sky : the keen rainless air is vibrant ; the tops of the straight poplars sway in the wind.²¹³

In this letter the Poet writes what impression Moscow made on him. Nowhere was any one bothered about comfort—neither in the Hotel where he stayed, nor in the office of his host, Professor Petrov, nor anywhere in the city. Every one was busy in his own constructive work. That's why the first glimpse he has is of some sort of desolation and poverty :

The hotel where I stayed in Moscow is called the Grand Hotel. It is a huge structure, but in poor condition...

I had to call on a high official, Dr. Petrov, in his office in a building which once belonged to an old aristocrat, but the office itself has little furniture and no sign of neatness...

The whole city wears the same appearance...It is as though gold buttons were worn on a torn dress shirt.²¹⁴

But this does not at all mean that the city is indeed poor. It is simply that this is a city of ordinary people ; everybody is labouring hard ; there are no rich people, idling away their time. In the West, instead, the outer facade of luxury has poverty concealed behind it :

*It is chiefly because of the difference between the rich and the poor elsewhere that the picture of concentrated wealth strikes the eye so forcibly ; there the poverty is in background, hidden behind the drop curtain : behind the scene everything is topsy-turvy, filthy and unhealthy, dense with the darkness of sorrow, misery and evil deeds. But to us outsiders looking through the window of the shelter we obtain, everything appears proper, elegant and everybody well fed.*²¹⁵

But all sorts of people are walking along the streets of Moscow. Nobody is well dressed : one knows at once that the leisured class has disappeared altogether ; everybody has to earn his own living by his own hands : the refinements of luxury are nowhere in evidence.

And the Poet likes this indifference to comfort. For, one of the main ills of Western civilisation he sees in the measurement of value of man by his wealth, and regrets that this shameful thing is also finding its way to his own homeland, India.

The pride, arising from the difference of wealth has come to our country from the West...Pride in wealth is the greatest shame for a man, we must beware that this meanness does not reach our inmost social being.

What has pleased me most here is the complete disappearance of the vulgar conceit of wealth. For this reason alone the self-respect of the people has been restored. Seeing all this, I am both thrilled and happy.²¹⁶

On this day, in Moscow, Mr. Amiya Chakravarty, Mr. Ariam, Miss Einstein, accompanied by Mr Marianov, visited the Vakhtangov theatre and saw the play "Princess Turandot."²¹⁷

On 20 September, the Poet woke up very early, and wrote two more letters, one to his son Rathindranath and the other to Pupumani. We shall cite here some extracts, first from the second letter to Pupumani because in it we can sense the living presence of the Poet :

You just cannot imagine where I am. A big house, wonderful garden ! A forest of big, big trees as far as I can see. It is cloudy, very cold. The branches of tall trees are shaking. Amiya Babu is in Moscow, Ariam Babu is somewhere else, I have with me Dr. Timbers.

I don't have my watch now, but I think, it is about 8 o'clock in the morning. When I got up, I saw through the window it was dark and the stars were still there in the sky. Remained silently lying on the bed. When there was a little light, I got up, washed and started writing a letter. First wrote a long letter to your father, and now I am writing to you. But I am feeling hungry. Just now probably the maids woman will bring bread, eggs and tea.²¹⁸

From this letter we know that, at the summer house of Karakhan, Tagore was with his doctor, and perhaps with Saumyendranath.

The letter to Rathindranath Tagore, though the second written from Moscow, is better known. This is the opening letter

in the *Letters from Russia* as published. Rightly perhaps because, though concise, it is full of Poet's deep thoughts and reflections inspired by the visit to Russia. We shall here discuss some major ideas in this letter.

The very first words sounding so perceptibly, so loudly, in this letter—"could come to Russia *at long last*"—show the Poet's satisfaction and joy at having been able to come after numerous obstacles of all sorts.

Although, even before coming, he did know how the life here differed from that in the West, he now feels amazed at how different it indeed is and how unique :

Could come to Russia at long last. What I see excites wonder. Different to the core—unlike other countries. They (the Bolsheviks) are awakening up all alike from the very entrails.

He deeply reflects on the problem that had been his life long concern—that of those who are the very basis of civilisation yet most humiliated. He expresses it in beautiful words :

They are the lanterns of civilisation, and remain standing bearing these lanterns on their heads. Above all get light ; but their bodies get besmeared with the trickling oil.

But how to get out of it ? "All rich harvest of civilisation has flourished in the field of leisure. There is need to preserve a corner for leisure in human civilisation." But, then, this actually means that foodless India should continue to feed England. (Many English people think it natural that India's fulfilment should lie in eternally nourishing England. It is not wrong to keep a nation for ever in slavery in order that England may become great and do great things for mankind," said Tagore in the letter. "What does it matter if this nation eats little, wears little."²¹⁹

But can this injustice be allowed to go on ? Of course, not. What is the solution, then ?

Tagore never saw this solution anywhere, he found it only in Soviet Russia.

A solution is being sought out in Soviet Russia by striking at the very root of the problem—that is, in Poet's view, by liquidation of ignorance leading to mass awakening :

It is astonishing to watch the extraordinary vigour with which education spreads throughout Russian society. The measure of education is not merely in numbers, but in its thoroughness, its intensity. What abundant preparation, what tremendous effort, so that no one should remain helpless or idle ! Not in European Russia alone, but also among the semi-civilised races of Central Asia, they have opened the flood-gates of education. Unending effort is being made to bring the latest fruits of science to them.

And what did India get from the British rule ?—"A hundred years have gone by, and we have neither education nor health, nor wealth,"²²⁰ the Poet observes.

Tagore recollects his visit to the theatres in Moscow, and continues :

The theatres here are crowded, but those who come to them are peasants and workers. Nowhere are they humiliated. In the few institutions I have visited so far, I have seen the awakening of their spirit and the joy of their self-respect. Let alone our masses, their difference even with the working classes of England is colossal.

His thoughts again go to his dear, oppressed homeland, and he compares the conditions in India with what he sees now in Russia :

Every day I compare conditions here with India ; what is and what might have been ! Where stands diseased, hungry, hapless and helpless India ? A few years ago the condition of the masses here was fully comparable with that of the Indian masses : things have rapidly changed in this short period, whereas we are up to the neck in the mud of stagnation.²²¹

All this seems unbelievable ; and Tagore tries to restrain himself, as it were, and find defects. "The system of education in USSR is somewhat homogeneous," he suddenly decides. Is he not contradicting his ownself here ?

But he again recollects his meeting with pioneers and feels that they are doing what he has always tried to do at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. But they are doing it most effectively and on a nation-wide scale. He writes to his son, as if prophesying the future :

How splendid it would be if our workers could come here for training !²²²

We have no further information from Karakhan's summer house. It is possible, on these two days, Tagore also had talks with the host.

On 20 September, at 4 in the evening, Tagore returned to his hotel at Moscow—to get involved in the life of the capital again !

At 4-30 p.m., he was visited by a group of Moscow Orientalists,—Professor S. L. Vel'tman (we discussed his writings on Tagore in the previous chapters), Professor Rozaliya Shor (the Sanskritist known for her translations of stories of *Panchatantra* and other Sanskrit works), and others.

Late in the evening, at 7-30, he visited the famous Bolshoi Theatre to see the ballet "Bayaderka" based on an Indian love legend. On arrival, he was received by the Director of the Theatre, Madame E. K. Mal'novskaya, with whom he had a long talk after the performance.²²³

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On 21 September Tagore was visited by the well-known composer, S. A. Balasanyan who had set many poems of h's to music. The composer presented the poet the music notes composed on his words.²²⁴

We have presently no further information on Tagore's appointments for that day. Probably, he needed rest.

On 22 September, at 10 a.m., the eminent Soviet physician, Professor V. F. Zelenin visited Tagore, and had a thorough medical check-up of the Poet. Professor Zelenin found that the Poet was too tired, and advised him to spend more time in fresh air.

From 2 to 4 p.m., the Poet and his party had a sight-seeing excursion in Moscow and its suburbs. He also visited Kremlin, probably on this day.²²⁵

On 23 September, in the morning, Tagore took rest, while Mr. Ariam, accompanied by Mr. Eshukov, visited the Museum of Handicrafts Art.²²⁶

In the afternoon, Tagore had a meeting with the Deputy Editor of the gypsy journal "Nevo Drom" (New Road) and

other members of the editorial board of the journal. The Poet showed a great interest in the Gypsy language and art, specially in the question of the origin of the gypsies.²²⁷

We mentioned earlier that, besides Moscow, Tagore was also to be received in many other cities, including Leningrad. At Leningrad he was to visit the University, specially the Oriental Faculty, and meet there the famous Soviet Indologist, Academician F. I. Shcherbatskoi, with whom he had been corresponding for quite some time. Academician Shcherbatskoi had been looking forward to the Poet's visit to Soviet Russia and had plans to arrange meetings and receptions for him on a large scale.

Having decided to cancel his plans owing to ill health Tagore at once sent a letter, on 23 September itself, to Academician Shcherbatskoi :

Moscow : 23 September, 1930

Dear Professor,

I deeply regret, I am not visiting Leningrad owing to ill health, and cannot meet you there. My heart is weak, and so I am not fit to move about much or to do anything involving strain. I had a great desire to see your students, and I feel very sorry to cancel my plans.

My visit of Russia was full of surprises and has left me pondering on a great deal in respect of my country.

With hearty greetings.²²⁸

* * *

On 24 September, in the forenoon, Tagore again has a purposeful meeting with Professor F. N. Petrov.

Here Tagore again stresses the significant fact that the USSR solves not only its own problems but also those of the world, something which requires great courage. Petrov noted that the world problems could not but concern them because the Revolution had provided vast stimulus to the development of the earlier backward peoples.

Tagore once again states that his primary interest lies in the achievements in the field of education :

Your greatest achievement is the introduction, for the first time, of universal education, the use of inner strength of formerly oppressed and exploited masses. This no doubt will bring very big results and make it possible to create a more perfect world.²²⁹

In the course of the talk, then, Petrov said that the change in economic conditions was the basis of the spread of education among the broadest masses. Tagore added that he "could here acquaint himself with the system of involvement of the masses in culture and of the liberation of personality. For us the slightest spark of freedom, the slightest liberation of personality will have a great significance in future... *I firmly believe, this spark will later develop into socialism.*"²³⁰

In conclusion Petrov again told Tagore :

Your name is widely known to our people, and not only to intelligentsia but also to the broadest masses. All your books are published in Russian... They got so widely distributed amongst the people that these have to be looked for, now only in rare or secondhand book shops. This shows how we follow the ideals and thoughts set forth in your works... I am personally happy to have the opportunity of rendering some service, however modest, to you. Your wishes will have our full sympathy and we shall try to fulfil them.²³¹

Tagore regretted that he did not know Russian and would not therefore be able to see much. He expressed his desire to have whatever publications were available in English on the Soviet system of public education.

Petrov assured the guest that no efforts would be spared to select for him publications in English. He added, it was a pity, Tagore could not see the All Union Exhibition on Education mounted in Leningrad was over a couple of weeks back. He however promised to give some photographs of the Exhibition.

The meeting ended with Petrov hoping to have the pleasure of seeing the guest late that evening at the reception in his honour.²³²

At 7 p.m., that day, there was a farewell evening in honour of Tagore at the Hall of Columns of the House of Trade Unions

(*Dom soyuzov*). More than 2,000 of the invitees were present at the reception. This was only a part of those eager to attend. Though the Hall of Columns is one of the largest in Moscow (this was formerly a meeting hall of the Moscow aristocracy, or, as it was called *Dvoryanskoe sobranie*), that evening, it was full to the last seat available. As Professor Petrov recalled in his reminiscences, "the whole Moscow seemed to be wanting to be present." "Heaps and heaps of requests came whole day to VOKS for entrance passes ; and after the working hours, the telephone kept ringing till late night with requests for passes."²³³

The Presidium consisted of Rabindranath Tagore, Professor Petrov, Professor Kogan, a number of eminent Soviet writers and actors, D. Novomirsky, A. Eshukov and others. Professor Petrov opened the evening with a welcome address, and stressed how dearly the Poet was loved and respected in the Soviet Russia :

Comrades, the name of Rabindranath Tagore is well known to our Soviet public... We know him very well as a lyric poet... But as a social poet, as one expressing the aspirations of his people for freedom, we know him much lesser. Not only this. Tagore has sought to find a practical solution for the idea of creating a harmonious human personality worthy of itself. In his unique educational institution near Calcutta he has tried to solve the great problem of cultivating new harmonious human personality, one capable of combining daily labour with highest intellectual work...

We are extremely happy to see in our country one of the greatest poets, greatest thinkers and practical workers in the field of education. Rabindranath Tagore's visit is of great value because he came to us to know how we solve the problem of creating new cultural conditions leading towards perfection...

We are glad, Tagore is convinced, here on the spot, that the rumours spread abroad about our cultural life, our construction work, are false. It is most valuable to us when such men as R. Tagore come here with an open heart and pure soul to see our reality.

Tagore, with his great mind, has been able to understand the importance of what is happening in our country. He is interested not in the external view of life or in apparent shortcomings but in deep, loftiest processes of creative work, which are going on in the conditions of construction of socialism.

Permit me to greet the dear guest and the greatest Poet and thinker R. Tagore on behalf of academic and artistic circles and also all our Soviet public.²³⁴

Others to speak after Petrov included some Soviet scholars and public figures. In his reply, Tagore said :

I am highly honoured at the invitation to appear in this hall and I am grateful to Dr. Petrov for the kind words he has said about me. I am thankful to your people for giving me the opportunity of knowing this country and seeing the great work which the people are doing in this land.

My mission in life is education. I believe that all human problems find their fundamental solution in education. And outside of my own vocation as a poet, I have accepted this responsibility to educate my people as much as lies in my individual power to do so. I know that all the evils, almost without exception, from which my land suffers are solely owing to the utter lack of education of the people.

Poverty, pestilence, communal fights, and industrial backwardness make our path of life narrow and perilous owing to the meagreness of education. And this is the reason why, in spite of my advanced age and my weak health, I gladly accepted the invitation offered to me to see how you are working out the most important problem of education in this country. I have seen, I have admired and I have envied you in your great opportunities. *You will know that our condition in India is very similar to yours . . .*

The little that I have seen has convinced me of the marvellous progress that has been made, the miracle that has been achieved. How the mental attitude of the people has been changed in such a short time, it is difficult for us to

realize, who live in the darkest shadow of ignorance and futility. It gladdens my heart to know that the people, the real people who maintain the life of society and bear the burden of civilisation, are not deprived of their own rights and that they enjoy equal share of all the advantages of a progressive community.

And I dream of the time when it will be possible for that ancient land of Aryan civilization also to enjoy the great boon of education and equal opportunities for all people. *I am thankful, truly thankful to you all who have helped me in vitalising in a concrete form the dream which I have been carrying for a long time in my mind, the dream of emancipating the peoples' minds which have been shackled for ages.*

For this I thank you.²³⁵

"Tagore spoke brilliantly, his wise eyes fixed on his audience. His speech left an indelible impression on all present. It was an unforgettable evening, indeed!"—recalled Professor Petrov later in his reminiscences.²³⁶

The evening ended with a concert, where there was a recital of Tagore's poems set to music by Soviet composers. Those taking part in the concert included one of the most distinguished Soviet singers, the soloist of the Bolshoi Theatre, I. S. Kozlovsky, Galperin, Ruslanov, Simonov and others.

The author-composer Dzegelyanko at the piano, Kozlovsky (Artist Emeritus of the Republic), actor of the 1st State Opera House, made a special recital in honour of the Poet, the Ario from the Russian Opera "Sadko" with music by Rimsky-Korsakov.

The gist of this last song is as follows (rough translation) :

Oh wonderful land, India,
The numberless diamonds of far India,
With the lovely warm sea
Where on the stone near the white shore
 grows a tree of wisdom
Paradise songs are heard sung by beautiful
 birds,
And all is then forgotten in bliss
Far India of miracles.

The author Galperin read three pieces of Tagore's poems : The Happiness of Rhythm ; Away with Hymns ; There were There is Reason.

Ruslanov, an actor of the well-known Vaghtangov Theatre, recited Tagore's two poems, in prose, one about the travelling companion and his path, and the other about the naked little boy, how he was scared by the sheep near the sea-shore.

The actor Simonov recited excerpts from *The Post Office*.²³⁷

Rabindranath Tagore then recited two of his poems in Bengali, "The Rain Song" and "A Love Poem". These were received with tremendous applause and aroused great admiration and enthusiasm. "Tagore also recited some of his poems on the Soviet Russia composed by him that day," reminisced later Professor Petrov.²³⁸ [But we have not been able to locate any such poems as yet].

After a short interval a display of dancing and folk music was given by various artists, such as Zagorskaya, the famous Russian folk-singer, Messerer of the First Moscow Opera House who danced the "Ribbon Dance" from the Red Poppy ballet, Ryabtsev and his group from the First Moscow Opera House who gave a demonstration of Russian village songs, Yablochka in the sailor's "Apple Dance", and Madame Chevchenko, the Russian folk-singer. The programme terminated with a recital of Russian folk-songs and dances of the Northern and Central regions of the USSR by a peasant choir directed by Piatinitsky.

At the close of the evening the whole audience gave a great ovation to the Poet as a farewell expression of their admiration.²³⁹

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On 25 September Tagore was full of impressions from the previous evening at the Hall of Columns.

And the last day of his stay in Moscow was a very busy one.

Probably right in the morning, he wrote his third letter from Moscow—this one to Professor Mahalonobis.

The letter opens with those often quoted memorable lines which have even provided titles for many writings on the theme of Tagore and Russia, and which convey the unique importance of this visit for Tagore :

I am now in Russia. Had I not come, my this life's pilgrimage would have remained totally incomplete.

Tagore is exhilarated by incredible boldness of the peoples of new Russia :

What incredible courage ! What is called old, traditional clings to a man in a thousand different ways... *they have completely torn it up by its roots here...* The seat of the ancient has been swept away to make room for the new... They have girded up their loins to create a new world in a field of far-reaching consequence.²⁴⁰

Tagore understood that the Soviet peoples' accomplishments were made possible by the October Revolution. Looking into its causes, he wrote :

The revolution in Russia was long in the making. It was carefully prepared : countless people, both known and unknown, sacrificed their lives and suffered untold hardships for it. Although the prerequisites for revolutions exist everywhere, they occur only in certain countries.

In Russia, the dispossessed and rightless masses had been most cruelly oppressed by those who had concentrated wealth and power in their own hands. It was therefore in Russia that the outrageous inequality between the oppressed and the oppressors called for the destruction of the very foundations of the system. Similar inequality brought about the French Revolution. The oppressed had already realised that inequality brings poverty and oppression everywhere. That is why during the French Revolution the call for liberty, equality and brotherhood resounded the world over, far beyond the bounds of France. But the echo died.

*The call of the Russian Revolution is also addressed to the whole of mankind. In today's world there is only one nation not only concerned about their own interest, but also about the world's fate.*²⁴¹

Thus Tagore continues to dilate on the thoughts which he far back in 1918 had expressed in his *At the Cross Roads*, though now, after his visit to Soviet Russia, with a much broader outlook. His assessment about the Revolution is that it had to take place just in Russia because just here the people underwent the most unbearable sufferings.

Further, Tagore asks what has India to fear from the Russian Revolution because the forces which the Revolution seeks to destroy are those which oppress India too. He wrote :

Today at the very threshold of the rich invincible Western civilisation Russia has raised the seat of power for the dispossessed, completely ignoring the angry scowl of the West. Who will go and see this, if I do not ? If their aim is to overthrow the power of the powerful and the wealth of the wealthy, why should I fear, why should I be angry ?²⁴²

Tagore has a clear understanding of the tremendousness of the task and of the hardships which the Russian revolutionaries had to face :

They are very much in a hurry ; for their enemies are on all sides—everybody seems to be opposed to them. They are most rigidly determined to win the race against a thousand years in ten or fifteen. Compared to other nations the Russians are very poor in the power of wealth ; but superhuman is their power of determination.²⁴³

Tagore concludes his letter on a note of self-criticism, of modesty :

I would have been satisfied if I had possessed even a small measure of the tireless energy, courage, intelligence and self-sacrifice shown here.

Later, the Soviet poet Shengeli who, only the previous evening, had read an ode in honour of the Poet, called on Tagore. As Shengeli's widow later told the author of this book, the meeting was very intimate and cordial. Shengeli showed a great interest in Indian literature, and Tagore, as she recalled, was eager to spend some time amidst the Russian peasants if only his health helped.

Next engagement of Tagore for the day was with the workers of the Soyuzkino [Union Cinema Association] for further discussion on films based on scenarios from his works.²⁴⁴ Before his departure from Moscow, Tagore gave an interview to a Correspondent of "Izvestiya". (Some extracts from this interview were already quoted by us).

On being asked if he would say a few words in regard to his general impressions of Moscow, the Poet again appreciated greatly the achievements of the Soviet education. He said :

I wish to let you know how deeply I have been impressed by the amazing intensity of your energy in spreading education among the peasant masses, the most intelligent direction which you have given to this noble work, and also the variety of channels that have been opened out to train their minds and sense and limbs. I appreciate it all the more keenly because I belong to that country where millions of my fellow countrymen are denied the light that education can bring to them.

He further states :

You have recognised the truth that in extirpating all social evils one has to go to the root, which can only be done through education, and not through police batons and military brow-beating.

He notes that he knows all the difficulties and obstacles which the new Russia should overcome :

True, you have to fight against obstacles, you have to overcome ignorance and lack of sympathy, even persistently virulent antagonism.

But he emphasizes :

Your mission is not restricted to your own nation... it is for the betterment of humanity according to your light.²⁴⁵

In a true, friendly spirit, Tagore also suggested to his hosts to have pity for those who do not share their views.

These thoughts of Tagore have been misinterpreted by the motivated Western press as some kind of "warning" and so forth and so on.²⁴⁶

In fact, Tagore's words were not a "warning" as it were ; these only expressed the abstract side of his humanism and his general non-acceptance of violence, which comes into contradiction with reality and even with his own vision of the world. For, as we know, Tagore was fully aware that one could not fight out the dark forces merely by pity and persuasion. Later, he expressed this idea most clearly while voicing his condemnation of fascist barbarism.

Besides, we have seen, there is no such reference in his letter to Professor Mahalanobis just quoted by us.

On the other hand, as we shall see later, this interview and

others given not in the Soviet Union but in the USA gave grounds to many organs of Western press to call him a friend of the Soviet Union as he indeed was. Some even said that he was the true propagandist²⁴⁷ of the Soviet Russia. It is significant that Tagore's statements in the U.S.A. do not have the slightest note of any criticism of USSR,²⁴⁸ but are instead only appreciative in character,—specially when he, as we shall see, again continued to condemn the ills of the modern Western civilisation, contrasting it, when necessary, to the civilisation in new Russia.

The misinterpretations in the Western press, we must say, were clumsy attempts to obscure the significance of Tagore's statements on the evils of the modern Western civilisation.

Concluding the interview to "Izvestiya", and expressing again his admiration of the ideal the country had set before itself, Tagore said :

Your ideal is great and so I ask you for perfection in serving it.²⁴⁹

At 9.15 in the evening, Tagore left Moscow. Tagore was seen off at the railway station by representatives of public organisations led by Professor F. N. Petrov.²⁵⁰

Tagore carried with him happy memories and deep impressions which, as we shall see, remained obsessing him wherever he went thereafter.

We conclude this account of Tagore's stay in Soviet Russia with Shengeli's Ode, which Tagore took with him and possibly read during his journey to Berlin :

We have in Crimea a valley—"Indol"
Which means : "The Road to India",
Traversed for centuries by the merchant & the warrior
And for centuries since, lying in obscurity.

But the memory of the mysterious land
In the depths of the language survived
The Indian "*agni*" is in Russian "*ogon'*",
And the Russian "*vedai'*" does Indian Vedas resound.

And somewhere, in tales and tunes,
 One sometimes comes across a strange image
 From where the lotus reaches out to the star
 And where allures the twilight of Ellora
 Even otherwise, a world quite of its own
 Across unmeasured spaces
 Yearningly does our icy Pamir look
 On snowy Devalagiri.
 But we are not to be ever apart
 Nor to keep our treasures concealed.
 The spirit of the times bids
 In ties of fraternity our two worlds unite
 To us—your wisdom, to you—our ardent zeal,
 To us—the depths, to you—the fury and flame,
 That in the confluence of two great forces
 Our world anew created be.
 Russia—the key ; India—the lock ;
 Join them ; and the chains will fall away
 And a new world, lofty and free
 Will sparkle off at once,
 In splendid play of colours.
 And you, Tagore, the harbinger of new days
 You, who weave rhyme to rhyme,
 Who having sung to us of India herself
 Will there in India tell about us.²⁵¹

From Moscow the Poet arrived at Berlin, where for 3 or 4 days he rested in the house of Dr. and Mrs. Mendel at Wannsee.²⁵²

From here the Poet wrote four letters, of which three are included in the *Letters from Russia*.

A detailed analysis of all letters from and about Russia is not within the scope of the present work, for it is a theme for an independent research. We have here summed up such statements of Tagore that are more relevant to our study, reproducing excerpts from the letters only where necessary to illustrate our point.

In some cases we had to take the quotations needed from original Bengali and translate them afresh into English.²⁵³

Besides, these letters are well known but no complete scientific analysis of these is so far available. The most successful study of these letters so far, we feel, is in the book, already referred by us, of Nepal Mazumdar.

In examining these letters we have ever kept in mind to whom these were written and under what circumstances. For, we feel, Tagore seems to adapt the ideas, thoughts, judgements in his letters to the sphere of interest, background and level of persons to whom he writes.

The first letter of 28 September 1930 is addressed to Nirmalakumari Mahalanobis, but is obviously also meant for Professor Mahalanobis.

What conclusions does Tagore arrive at just after leaving the Soviet Russia ?

He begins his letter, reflecting on the conditions of the peasants in his own country :

Having come back from Russia...I can only think of the country-wide misery of our peasantry.²⁵⁴

The most important point he makes in the letter is how to solve the agrarian problem. What is necessary, he says, is the giving away of land from the *Zamindar* to the peasant who tills it and switching over to collective tilling on cooperative basis :

In this connection two thoughts revolved in my mind : first, that the right to the land does not morally belong to the landlord, but to the peasant ; secondly, agriculture will never improve unless land can be collectively cultivated by cooperative methods. The attempt to raise crops on strips of land, separated by ridges, by means of time-honoured ploughs is as good as trying to fill a bottomless pit.²⁵⁵

But simply this giving away of land to the peasant may not do. For, one form of exploitation may give way to another, still worse :

But...No sooner is the right to the land given to the peasant then it immediately passes under the control of money-lender : hence the burden of his suffering must increase instead of decreasing.²⁵⁶

Strikingly right thoughts !

What really did Tagore see in the Soviet Union? This is what he says :

It all seemed like the work of the Genii in the Arabian Nights. Only a decade ago they were as illiterate, helpless and hungry as our own masses : equally blindly superstitious, equally stupidly religious. In their misery and trouble they knocked their heads against the door of their God : in fear of the other world their mind was held in bondage by the priests, and in fear of this world by the king, merchants and landlords : their task was to clean the boots of those who kicked them with those very boots.²⁵⁷

The achievements of the people in the new Russia are all the greater because they had to get over incredible hardships and offer stubborn resistance to the old world. Of the thirteen years that have passed since the Revolution they have been allowed only eight for real constructive work. They could achieve success with extreme scantiness of means and with no help coming from anywhere :

The Revolution which brought the Tsarist rule to an end took place only in 1917, that is, only thirteen years ago. Meanwhile, they have had to fight against violent oppositions both at home and abroad. They are alone...their resources are small : they have no credit with foreign bankers. Not having enough industries at home they are powerless as producers of wealth. Hence they must live through their period of probation by selling their own food.²⁵⁸

Meanwhile a devastating famine had raged in Russia for some time : nobody knows how many people died. Having overcome it they have had only eight years in which to engage in the task of ushering in the New Age.²⁵⁹

In this letter he gives a concise but strikingly correct assessment of the policy of the new Russia, contrasting it with that of the imperialist states :

The Soviets, objective is not to extend their spheres of influence or territorial expansion, but to create, on a broad scale, by the best method, the ways and means of education, health and provision of food for the people. *What they need above all is undisturbed peace ...* Whereas in

all imperialist states the provision of daily bread is subordinated to the production of arms.²⁶⁰

Tagore exposes once again the anti-humanist nature of the policy of imperialist states and scoffs at the hypocrisy of their politics :

I remember how they confounded the false peace-makers from the League of Nations by their proposal of disarmament. . . But you well know that the strong men of the League of Nations do not really want to stop their far-reaching acts of rascalism, however much they may shout for peace.²⁶¹

In conclusion he says that he has now "clearly seen what might have been done, but has not been done in India."²⁶²

Developing his reflections on the destiny of the Indian peasantry Tagore writes on 1 October one more letter directly to Professor Mahalanobis.

In this letter he gives in detail his personal (and not gathered from books) impressions of his meeting with Soviet peasants—both individuals and collective farmers. Again, he is amazed by the striking changes in their minds—and all in just ten years :

I saw with my own eyes how the Russian peasants have left the Indian peasantry behind in less than a decade. Not only have they learnt to read books : they are transformed mentally : they have become men.²⁶³

He deeply ponders on the question of property ; and feels that the property used only for self breeds hostility :

For oneself there must be something of one's own ; everything else should be for others. A true solution is possible only by recognising both self and non-self. When one of them is forgotten, there is conflict with the law of human nature.²⁶⁴

The abstract side of Tagore's humanism apparently makes him see things rather one-sidedly. The use of force, we see, is not acceptable to him. But the West, he notes, recognises application of force :

The man of the West puts too much faith in force.²⁶⁵

So, the use of force is admissible but only if it is for the good :

Where force is really necessary, it all goes well : elsewhere it causes mischief.²⁶⁶

Then, he recalls with joy that in the Soviet Russia there is not the slightest trace of racial discrimination :

I have now seen them for myself and I have also seen that in their state there is no difference whatsoever of race or colour.²⁶⁷

He again contrasts India and Russia. And he cannot but feel sad about the fate of his people deprived of education :

We, British subjects, could not even dream of the boundless general enthusiasm with which they began educating the big and small nationalities of all the territories and districts of Russia.²⁶⁸

In a short letter to Radharani Devi, on 1st October, he expressed his satisfaction that he had at last been able to free himself from all sorts of obstacles to go to Russia :

A few days back, freeing myself from the bindings, I had gone away to Russia.

And not in vain ! For, as he says, "henceforth, mentally, I was completely captivated by Russia."²⁶⁹

His last letter from Berlin, he wrote, on 2 October, to Asha Adhikari. In this letter again he reiterates how delighted he felt with the Soviet system of education, and gives his impressions taken again not from books but from his meeting with the Soviet Pioneer school students :

All manner of experiments are being carried out in Russia in connection with methods of teaching. . .

I saw it the other day when I went to visit one of the educational centres founded in that country called the Pioneers' Commune. The pioneers there are something like our *bratibalaks* and *bratibalikas* at Santiniketan. . . Do not forget that these are all orphans. . . Looking at their faces I could see that they were not at all faces veiled in the fog of neglect and humiliation. No diffidence, no awkwardness !²⁷⁰

The chief merit of this education system Tagore sees in its being life-oriented :

Here education is living. I have always insisted that education must be reconciled with life. There I found education has become vital, because the boundary of the school does not divide it from daily life.²⁷¹

Here Tagore also touches on the agrarian problem, and emphasizes the efforts of the Soviet government for successful and large-scale mechanisation of agriculture :

Before the Revolution of 1917, ninety per cent of the peasants had never seen a machine plough... In a trice, as it were, thousands of machine ploughs appeared on their fields.²⁷²

Though Tagore did, in all his modesty, say that economics did not concern him much, he actually has a definite and precise idea of the tasks before the new Russia at the time of fulfilment of their first five-year plan.

They acted the "living newspaper" before me. The subject was the Five Year Plan. It is like this : they have taken the grim vow of making the whole country efficient by the use of the machine, of utilising electric and steam power from one end of the country to the other.²⁷³

But maybe as a poet, he was most of all touched by the involvement of the wide masses into the world of art, which was unthinkable in the Czarist times.

There are few to equal these people in the histrionic art... Today the theatres are crowded, so that it is difficult to get in, with those who in the earlier days had no shoes to their feet, whose bodies were covered with torn and dirty clothes, who were half starved, walked day and night in fear of man and God, bribed the priests for salvation and heaped humiliation upon themselves by grovelling in the dust before their masters.²⁷⁴

He also recalls his surprise at how these people were interested in his own paintings the meaning of which, in his own country, may not be understandable even to some art critics :

There was an exhibition of my pictures in Moscow. These are somewhat unusual... Nonetheless, there was no end to the jostling crowd. In a few days, at least five thousand had seen them. Whatever others may say, I cannot help praising their taste.²⁷⁵

Tagore ends his letter by recalling the hardships he faced in his own education work and how he had literally to go against the stream :

My five year plan may never be completed. For nearly, thirty years I have dragged the boat along alone and against

opposition : I must try to do the same for another few years, but it will not progress far I well know²⁷⁶

He mentions in the letter that he would take the evening train that day for the sea-port and then be in the U.S.A.

There is no more time today. By this evening's train I start out to take the boat : the crossing begins tomorrow.²⁷⁷

Leaving Berlin on 3 October, Tagore reaches the U.S.A. on 9 October itself—quite fast ! But even on the ship "Bremen" he can hardly rest himself physically and mentally because, after his thrilling though tiring trip to Soviet Russia, he is still obsessed by his impressions of Russia, how best to use his Russian experience in India and, what is more, how to describe his experiences to his friends having the most diverse views. He must describe his experiences in such a way that there is no distortion of truth and these at the same time do not remain confined to his own friends but can be published in India for all to read.

He, a little later, wrote from this ship itself to Ramananda Chatterjee :

Gathering all the letters I have written [on Soviet Russia], you will be able to know a great deal.

It is necessary that every one knew about it. So have it all translated into English and publish in "Modern Review".²⁷⁸

Tagore wrote 7 letters from s.s. "Bremen", and all these form a part of the book *Letters from Russia* as later published. Virtually half of the book is taken up by these seven letters, of which four are to Sudhindranath Kar.

In the very first of these four letters, written on 3 October itself, Tagore says that no other country made such strong impression on him. He had been to many countries, from Norway to Argentina, and had visited the United States five times, but it was only in the Soviet Union that he saw the implementation of his social ideals :

The other countries I have visited have never so wholly stirred my mind.

This is because the new Russia is so united, and not divided by individualistic egoism so harmful to unity. And in this the Poet sees its great strength.

There, the whole country, intent on one purpose, has gathered up all the activities of the land in one nervous system and assumed a giant body and a colossal personality... There they are creating an extraordinary entity called common task, common mind and common property.²⁷⁹

Here, Tagore also describes how the museums, art galleries there have become an important part of all education, designed also to cultivate in the broadest masses an artistic sense. He enthusiastically speaks of involvement of masses in the lofty world of art :

They have gradually to create artistic sense in the minds of these people.

Tagore sarcastically rejects the imperialist propaganda about the restrictions on creative endeavour in the USSR. He says :

The theatrical art which has so blossomed on the Russian stage is continuing its quest for new forms of expression. Their social revolution bears the same imprint of daring innovation. *They have no fear of novelty in anything—in social relations, politics or art.*²⁸⁰

May be, one of the most important points of the letter is Tagore's statement that the Russian revolutionaries have liberated the masses from the fetters of religious prejudices, the greatest enemies of the freedom of spirit and the main ally of the monarch who wishes to keep his subjects in servitude.

The Russian revolutionaries have uprooted the old religious system and the political structure both of which for centuries had subdued their minds and sapped their vitality.

My heart leaps with joy to see such a painfully enslaved nation attain such a great liberation in such a short time. *For the religion that destroys the freedom of the mind of man by keeping him ignorant is a worse enemy than the worst of monarchs ; for the monarch crushes the spirit of his subjects only from the outside.*

We know from the past that the ruler who sought ever to enslave his subjects, always took shelter in a form of that religion which blinded the intellect of his people.

The religion is like the poison princess who fascinates by embracing and kills by fascinating. *The arrow of piety*

enters the heart deeper than the arrow of death, because it kills without hunting.²⁸¹

How modern, how relevant today are these thoughts of Tagore on how harmful the old religious prejudices are. We could not omit anything here from the remarkable statements of Tagore.

The culminating point of the letter is the striking conclusion drawn by the Poet of life— by the so-called 'mystic poet', as some circles in the USA refer to him :

Far better is atheism than religious infatuation.²⁸²

Obviously, Tagore has some spiritual affinity with the person to whom he is writing this letter ; because to some of his friends such an observation might have come as a shock.

He ends his letter with his assessment as to how the Revolution saved the country, and what vast possibilities the Revolution opened before the peoples of new Russia for throwing off the cruel oppression of the Czarist rule and shackles of religious superstitions :

The Soviets have saved this country from the Czarist and self created humiliation . . .

The terrible weight of religion and tsarist oppression was breaking the back of Russia, and with this weight removed, every visitor can see with his own eyes the opportunities which opened up before the country.²⁸³

The other three letters (from 7 and 8 October) to Kar further develop the ideas of this important letter. For instance, Tagore describes how developed tourism is in USSR as a part of education and healthy upbringing of an individual and how he himself considers travel as a good supplement to learning from books. The Poet says that in the new Russia tourism is for all and not merely for a small group :

One of the means of learning by seeing is travelling . . .

I noticed enormous developments in travelling facilities for the public in Soviet Russia . . . In the reign of the Tsars, there was hardly any opportunity for them to know one another. Needless to say, in those days, travelling was a luxury,—possible only for the rich. Under the Soviet rule the effort is to make it possible for everybody.²⁸⁴

Tourism has now also helped in the care of the health of the people. And, the Poet recalls how new sanatoria have been

built in many places and how the old palatial buildings of the aristocracy have been adapted for purposes of places of rest. The Poet's thoughts again go to his homeland when he contrasts all this with the conditions in India where only a very small part of the highest strata of society, and not even the middle classes, can have such facilities.

He also touches on the problem of use of native languages of peoples of the USSR in the various Soviet Republics ; and observes that "if a native tongue of our people were the state language in our country, it would not have been so difficult for the people to deal with Government officers."

Further, describing the achievements of formerly most backward peoples of USSR, for instance, the Bashkirs and Turkmens, he exclaims :

Are we more backward than, for instance, the Uzbeks and Turcomans ?²⁸⁵

How is it possible to provide for all these ? Because, they need not "fill the pockets of capitalists, foreign or national : here the factories belong to the people."²⁸⁶

The letter written by Tagore on 4 October to Ramananda Chatterjee has a different tone. In this letter Tagore says that he went to the USSR only to acquaint himself with the system of education there, for lack of education is a great cause of all poverty and ignorance in India. (Japan and Turkey too had a measure of success after spread of education).

Tagore says that before going there he did not have much hope. Seeing to the problems of the vast country that India is, he could expect the Soviets to be faced with far greater difficulties specially because they had enemies supported by the British and the Americans. But what he saw in the Soviet Russia simply amazed him :

It is said that in some European places of pilgrimage, the lame from birth has by divine grace suddenly been made whole ; this is what has happened here [in Soviet Russia]. . . . In human society the people of Russia stand with their heads held high : their minds and hands have become their own.²⁸⁷

But here Tagore restrains himself, apparently not to shock the person to whom he is writing. He says that he knows. there

is some use of force. But "this is only the shadow side of the moon ; my main object was to see her bright side [that is, the spread of universal education]." says Tagore.

Tagore here also ironically mentions :

Our royal Christian priests have spent a long time in India and they have seen how hard the difficulties are. They will be well advised to go Moscow once, but then this going will be of no use, because they have the professional habit of specially seeing only evil. They are unable to see light specially when they are averse to something.²⁸⁸ [This passage is found omitted in the English trans'ation of *Letters from Russia*—author].

Tagore says, it's a pity that certain politicians have been apathetic to his idea of spread of education. Let it be so ; but they are not only apathetic but oppose even when authorities agree :

What is most regrettable and shameful is that it is our compatriots brought up on crumbs from their tables who have opposed this help [from the authorities] most.

This is the most serious disease in countries under foreign domination. There is no greater poison than the jealousy, pettiness and antagonism to one's kith and kin in the minds of people in these countries.²⁸⁹

Thus we see that Tagore does not forgive any apathy to the destiny of one's homeland.

He concludes his letter with the confidence that the vast difficulties before India can be overcome :

I had read in books and heard of the enormous difficulties of this country, but now I have seen how they can be overcome²⁹⁰

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Tagore's next letter from s.s. "Bremen" is one of 5th October to Nandalal Bose. This letter specially emphasizes how the leaders of the new Russia saved with care the cultural treasures and taught the people to appreciate them despite difficulties caused by wide-spread ruin and war :

...Even through this period of lawlessness and violence, strict orders had come from the revolutionary leaders not to destroy any object of art.²⁹¹

He recollects how, even in those terrible years when there was so much ruin and even typhus, the scientific workers went from place to place to collect works of ancient art,—not only classical, but also folk. At the same time, he contrasts this vast effort with the doings of the “cultured” Western imperialists who destroyed so mercilessly the great works of art in Peking.

I remember the scenes we saw when we visited Peking. How cruelly had the Spring Palace of Peking been razed to the ground by the imperialists of Europe and age-long accumulations of priceless works of art plundered, torn, broken, blown to pieces and burnt.²⁹²

Tagore further recalls how the Soviets deprived the rich and the churches of many cultural treasures so that these could be in the museums for the use of the broadest masses.

The revolutionaries have pulled down the walls of the church properties and made them the possessions of the people. Apart from what is necessary for religious purposes, everything else is being collected in the museums.

As if arguing against some opponent defending the sanctity of the principle of private property, Tagore does not at all censure the taking away of personal property from the rich and from the church because it was done for the good of the people.

Returning to the urgent need of spread of education in India, Tagore asks :

The civil and military services, the Governors, the Viceroy and their counsellors—why should their pockets claim immunity from tax collection [for education]? Why should they not assign funds for education from their plunder and loot of India?²⁹³

Tagore knew that they would never.

His last letter from the ship, just before arriving in New York, Tagore writes on 9 October to Kalimohan Ghosh. This letter begins with an account of the work of the Moscow Park of Culture (now named after Maksim Gorky), aimed at education of the masses. Tagore likens this place to a permanent *mela* [fair], and even humorously adds that there are all sorts of good things in the restaurant except wine! A part of

the Park is exclusively for children, and adults are not allowed here. The Park also has creches.

Here, Tagore emphasizes the responsibility that the Soviet state takes for the upbringing of children and the wide resources allocated for the purpose, but clarifies that the parents are also fully responsible for the children up to the age of 18.

He also again speaks of the facilities of sanatoria which in India are not available even to persons with means.

We should say that this letter also reflects the abstract side of Tagore's humanism and maybe some thing else. Of the relation between the society and the individual here he says, it is one-sided and balanced more in favour of society. But at the same time he directly rectifies himself by saying that in the spread of education all efforts are directed towards developing the mind and *creating a harmonious personality*.

By subordinating education to their particular theory... they have made it one-sided, nevertheless they have not prevented the cultivation of the mind altogether...they... have made violent efforts to rid the lay mind of religious superstition and blindness of social tradition.²⁹⁴

Here Tagore also gives formulation of his position that in the Soviet Union there exists dictatorship but of a totally different type—one directed to development of mind at a time when the dictatorships in the West strive to paralyse the mind.

Tagore sums up his position by saying that in introducing the changes they [Bolsheviks] also use the method of suggestion.

The letter ends with the information that the ship will reach New York in a few hours' time. "Then begins a new episode."

* * *

On 9 October 1930 the ship arrived at New York. Tagore's thoughts were still in far-off Russia where one's self-respect was not weighed against the means of luxury :

After a few days he writes to his son :

This time, the experience of Russia has made me ponder seriously over many things. I have been able to see most clearly how abundant means stand in the way of a person's self-respect.

The luxury in which he found himself again makes him unhappy :

Returning from there (USSR), when I turned out to be in the midst of luxury in Mendels [villa], I did not like it at all. The superfluities and wastage on s.s. "Bremen" made me averse [to all luxury] day by day. How great is the burden of wealth, yet how meaningless !²⁹⁵

The Hibbert lectures in England and the revealing visit to Soviet Russia being over, it now remained to find resources for Santiniketan. Something had been done : his friends, mainly European, were to publish an appeal for this in the "Manchester Guardian".²⁹⁶ (The appeal actually appeared on 10th October).

For Tagore's arrival in USA there was no special arrangement, as in Soviet Russia. It was just a routine.

Along with other passengers Tagore had to remain in quarantine as per immigration rules.

Soon, however, the Director of the Indian Society, Hari G. Govil, and some members of the just formed Tagore Reception Committee were there at the port to meet him ; but only to be lost in the jostling crowd of correspondents and press photographers, who showered Tagore with volleys of questions : "*Your impressions of Russia* [emphasis mine.—author] ?"; "What do you think of the national liberation movement in India ?"; "What is the future of Western civilisation ?" Though very tired, Tagore replied the questions one after the other.²⁹⁷

He belied all expectations of the American press correspondents to hear critical comments on Soviet Russia. He praised the great successes achieved by the Soviet Russia in the sphere of education of the masses, which was in striking contrast with the situation in India :

Ten years ago there was scarcely any difference between the mass of the people in Russia and the lower classes in India. The rapidity with which the education of the masses has progressed in the last ten years in Russia is almost impressive. It is something that for us in India is very hard to understand.

Education ? Why, only 5 per cent of our population are literate ! It is our problem in India to educate the people.

Now that I have seen with my own eyes that the effort to solve this problem has been so successful in Russia I know that it will be more successful in India, where the people are so anxious to learn.

(New York Herald Tribune, 10 October 1930)²⁹⁸

It should be noted here that during his prolonged stay²⁹⁹ in the USA Tagore never publicly made any critical comment on USSR. If there were any such comments, these were in Tagore's personal letters to Indians or made to his Soviet friends when he was with them. Not having the "needed" material, the American papers later started reproducing Tagore's interview with "Izvestia". [This interview was published in the "Manchester Guardian" on 14 October]. The American journalists interpreted it tendentiously with glaring captions, what we have already referred to.

Tagore's replies to questions on the national liberation movement in India, given by him in his first interview in USA, to the "New York American" appeared in the paper, with distortions.

Tagore was deeply concerned on the developments in India, the news of which he received here. The distortion, by the American press, of his opinion, angered him, and he at once sent a rejoinder to the Editor. This rejoinder was published by the paper on 13 October :

To the editor of the New York Times—

I cannot allow to remain uncontradicted some mis-statements of my view about the present Indian problem in the report of the interview with me which has appeared in your paper of this morning's issue. Yet it definitely be known that according to me it is the opportunity for self-government itself which gives training for self-government, and not foreign subjugation. . . .³⁰⁰

Tagore now did not wish to have anything to do with the American press. So, as Nepal Mazumdar notes, referring to Clarence Pickett, Tagore had to be persuaded to take part in the press conference organised on 13 October at Williamstown where he came from New York. Clarence Pickett writes :

Tagore was rebellious and wholly unwilling to cooperate. I began to discover that, saintly as he was, he was also able to be very positive and vigorous in expressing his disapproval. I tried to explain to him that, since he was hoping to place his cause before the American public, it seemed unwise to completely antagonise both the press and the moving picture industry.³⁰¹

In this interview published in "The Boston Herald" on 14 October, he came out more precisely with the achievements of the USSR ; and ironically rebuffed the attempts of the correspondents to seek negative observations, this time on the Soviet ideology.

Tagore only noted that he could not talk on Communism because he did not know enough about it :

I have been deeply impressed by mass education. It is true that they are trying to spread their own ideas of Communism. That aspect of their work does not concern me... But I chiefly wanted to see the methods which they use. I cannot judge their Communism as a philosophy of life because I don't know enough about it.

Tagore admitted that, before going to Russia, he could not even imagine that such vast difficulties could be surmounted and the common man could become so self-reliant :

They have overcome enormous difficulties which, before going to Russia, I felt could never be overcome. They no longer feel humiliated and oppressed, but are becoming intelligent and self-reliant.³⁰²

Referring to India, he again stressed that the talks with the British government should be conducted only on the basis of the acceptance of the right of India for self-rule.

We must first be freed from this subjection and from the artificial conditions to which it gives rise. We should first have the opportunity of governing ourselves if we are ever going to demonstrate our ability in that direction.³⁰³

"The statements that the Poet, on arriving in the USA, started making on the national liberation movement in India, and in support of the Soviet Union," as said by Nepal Mazumdar, "were not liked by some American capitalists."³⁰⁴

And when the Poet fell ill on 19 October, as his authentic biographer Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya writes, "such an atmosphere was created that the giving of lectures by the Poet be stopped."³⁰⁵

The American press blew the news of his illness to all proportions. For instance, the report in the "New York Review" reads :

Rabindranath Tagore, 69-year old Indian poet and philosopher, is suffering from a *serious case* of heart trouble. *All his American engagements have been cancelled* (emphasis mine—author).³⁰⁶

The Poet himself did not think much of his illness ; and wrote in one of his letters to Indira Devi :

If you were near me, you would understand that even if I am ill, I am not so ill !³⁰⁷

Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya stresses that the "situation was cleverly manipulated to give out that Tagore was very ill, tired, and should not be invited to meetings."

Explaining the reasons for such an attitude towards Tagore, Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya continues :

The Americans feared, the Poet would support Gandhism in India and make speeches, appreciating socialism in Russia !³⁰⁸

This view is also corroborated by Nepal Mazumdar.

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After he fell ill, Tagore was forced to stay at the house of Dean Lad at New Haven³⁰⁹ (where he had arrived on 15 October) up to the very beginning of November.

What Tagore was thinking and feeling all these days can be seen from the letters he wrote around this time, two of which are published as a part of *Letters from Russia*.

In one of these, namely, the one of 14 October to his son, Rathindranath (which we already mentioned), Tagore talked of his reflections on the Russian experience and of his disgust for meaningless luxury.

The Bengali scholar, S. Mukherjee, who had lived in the USA, in his book *Passages to America*, the most complete on the subject, even notes that "he was tremendously impressed by the Russian achievements...but it was the contrast between

the two countries that struck him...sharply when he came to America again."³¹⁰ Obviously, the contrast was between the spiritual barrenness, as it were, of the people in USA busy in the pursuit of dollar and the simple manners of the Russians freed from *greed* and engaged in creative activity.

This very letter shows Tagore's concern for Santiniketan. He has some hopes from his meeting with Rockefeller in November ; but is, in general, doubtful about the success of his mission :

Now America is passing through days of acute crisis ; even the rich men are afraid. Their own universities... have a shortage...I am very doubtful if anything can be expected in these conditions.³¹¹

But, in general, this asking for funds is not to his liking. As he writes in another letter on 14 October :

Begging...can yield the means, but it is in no way a healthy practice. And this contradicts the ideal of Santiniketan.³¹²

But more tangible hopes he had from his own exhibition of paintings which opened in Boston on 20 October :

Meanwhile, I have heard from Boston that the Exhibition had success. The sale [of paintings] too has started. Hopeful, on the whole.³¹³

He writes to his son on 24 October and adds that he is going to sail from USA to Cannes on 12 November. But his plans failed.

On 28 October he writes three letters.

The longest and most important is to Ramananda Chatterjee and is meant for publication. Chatterjee had already prepared for publication the first letter of the *Letters from Russia*, which appeared in November 1930 in "Prabasi" under the caption "Peoples' Education in Russia."

We shall be discussing this letter in detail, for it is the "Conclusion" to *Letters from Russia* and contains many important ideas and generalisations. Inherent in the letter are also some inconsistencies which sometimes, we feel, are interpreted tendentiously.

This impression of inconsistencies in the statements here we get if we remember all that Tagore spoke and wrote till this

time, specially in the United States, and also read carefully the other two letters sent by him the same day, that is, on 28 October.

And may be this time his idea was not so much to give out an account of the achievements of Soviet Russia (this he had done before) as to give the total picture of ruinous consequences of the British rule in India.

This letter perhaps would have helped the freedom fighters—specially now when the waves of national liberation movement were seething with a much greater ferocity and the Poet was deeply alarmed on the news from the homeland. [The very next day, as we know, Jawaharlal Nehru was again arrested].

Tagore was, of course, thinking how to adapt the experience of the Russian revolution to India, and it is here, naturally, that some inconsistencies are observed. The abstract side of his humanism did not accept the need, the inevitability of the use of force. Alongside this, he considers that Gandhism now shows how the struggle for the independence of India can be waged through non-violence. But still this freedom is far away, whereas Russia, in such a short time, has thrown off Czarism and has attained, on a massive scale, the ideal so dear to Tagore—the awakening of the masses at large.

And, therefore, though this letter was published in English translation in the "Modern Review" in June 1934 under the title "On Russia", it, in fact, put on trial the British rule in India.

Tagore had rightly hit the nail. This article evoked the nervous reaction of the colonial powers "for being objectionable and defamatory and derogatory to the British government". Further publication of the article was at once banned, and there was even a discussion in the House of Commons :

[In the House of Commons] Mr. R. J. Davies asked the Secretary of State for India whether he was aware that the Government of Bengal had given notice to "The Modern Review" of India that an article written by Rabindranath Tagore... was highly objectionable and that the editor had been warned that such articles must not be published in future...

Mr. Butler, Under Secretary for India : This article was taken from a book called *Letters from Russia*, which was published in Bengali by a local press in 1931. This book attracted little public attention and consequently no notice of it was taken by Government, but the translation into English of a particular chapter which was clearly calculated by distortion of the facts to bring the British administration in India into contempt and disrepute, and its publication in the forefront of a widely read English magazine, put a wholly different complexion on the case.³¹⁴

Is it also that Tagore's article this time attracted the attention of the British colonial powers because under the article there is a quotation from Lenin :

Revolution is impossible without an all national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters.—Lenin³¹⁵

The attainments of New Russia make Tagore ever more aware of the hideous poverty of India. He begins the article like this :

My first acquaintance with Soviet Russia has profoundly captivated my mind. . . Behind the picture of Soviet Russia that is engraved on my mind lurks the dark background of the misery of India.

And remarks further that he came to USSR when the *greed* of the British colonial powers and their utter neglect of the needs of India had become completely unbearable for him :

I went to Russia at a time when Imperial *greed* and its concomitant intolerable indifference thickened the darkness of the despair most in my mind.³¹⁶

It is not for nothing that we have here emphasized the word "*greed*" [Beng : *lobh*]. This is a much repeated word in the "letter" and in the subsequent articles of Tagore. It is for Tagore, we feel, a generalised idea in the sense of the blind pursuit of profit, that is, *the moral of the capitalist society*, and the very essence of capitalism.

We shall here note in passing that this article shows the Poet's reading of socio-economic literature of his time, includ-

ing the Marxist. At the same time, the terminology used by him is often his own.

The article is full of original, fresh images and is written in highly artistic, though complex and sophisticated language,—reminiscent of the style of the article “At the Cross Roads”. Why so? This, we feel, is quite obvious.

* * *

Tagore's views on new Russia, modern Western civilisation, and the British rule in India, are scattered all over the article, and are not easy to grasp at once.

Here it is our attempt to arrange systematically and sum up some of his statements.

I. *On New Russia*

It may first be mentioned here that, for Tagore, the new Russia had accepted one of the most important precepts of the Upanishads—*Ma Gridhah* (Don't be greedy). He earlier wrote in his letter of 4 October 1930 to Surendranath Kar :

In Soviet Russia I fully realized the meaning of those words of the Upanishads *Ma gridah* “Don't be greedy”. Why should not one be *greedy*? Because everything in the universe is but one network of truth. Personal *greed* stands in the way of the realization of that Oneness. *Tena tak-tena bhunjithah*, i.e. “Enjoy only that what comes from that Oneness.” From the material point of view the Russians are expounding the same truth as is found in the foregoing words from our sacred scriptures—*The Upanishads*. They consider the general welfare of humanity as the one supreme truth on earth. So they are willing to share equally all that society produces as one. *Ma gridhah ksyasidhanong*, i.e. “Don't have greed for another's wealth.” But the *greed* for wealth is the natural concomitant of personal ownership of property. They want to abolish this first, and then declare : “Enjoy only that what comes from Oneness.”³¹⁷

It is thus seen that Tagore's admiration for the new civilisation in Russia, accepting it as the civilisation of the future, opposed to the modern Western civilisation, was not some sort

of a mere isolated phenomenon cut off from his overall world outlook (as made out at times). It was something coming from the very sacred depths of his mind, imbibing (as the Poet himself often stressed) the spirit of the teachings of the Upanishads—the sum total of his life (not seeing to any critical remarks he may have made in a different context).

Of course, it would be far from realistic and an over-simplification to believe that Tagore accepted fully the economic theory of socialism. He, however, did see its relevance and said that the time to make the final judgement on it had not yet come as he had earlier said of the Revolution in "At the Cross Roads". He asserts that socialism was earlier consigned only to books (we should recall here that Tagore had thought of socialism far back in the 90's of the last century), but now it is being built up on a mass scale in New Russia.

Whether the [Russian] economic theory is fully acceptable or not it is not yet time to say, for this theory of socialism so long only floated mainly on pages of books. It has never been tried before on such a great scale and with such great courage³¹⁸

The Poet also touches the problem of dictatorship and of the mutual relation between the individual and the collective. Distinctively inherent in the assessment of these problems are the abstract aspects of his humanism. These are hard to reconcile with the need for dictatorship.

However, he has frequently and clearly stated that the dictatorship in New Russia is *basically different*, that it aims at *putting an end to the pursuit of profits (greed)*, *securing all benefits of education for the broad masses*, and building up a creative personality whereas the dictatorship of Czarism, for instance, had rested, instead, on the ignorance of the masses and did all to preserve it for its own survival :

I have seen its [dictatorship's] positive aspect, and that is education, the very reverse of force...

In the reign of the Tsars...people's mind deprived of education was under a spell and round it like a boa-constrictor coiled religious superstition. The emperor could without difficulty put this ignorance to his own use.³¹⁹

He, in fact, accepts its inevitability when he shows very expressively in what environment the new Russia had to create the new society with such hostility from the old order, and thus remain as if in a state of war :

The situation in Russia resembles war time conditions. She is beset with enemies at home and abroad. There is ceaseless manoeuvring all round to wreck the entire experiment. The foundations of their structure therefore must be strengthened as quickly as possible, hence they have no qualms about using force.³²⁰

So the use of the force is obviously inevitable.

Tagore's treatment of the problems of the relation between personality and society, collective and individual, also clearly manifests this conflict between the abstract and real aspects of his humanism. He speaks of the 'one-sided' approach to this problem, tilting in favour of collectivism. [This term "one-sided" Tagore also employs in his critical comments on dictatorship].

A man has two sides to his life—in one way he is independent, and in the other he is a part of the whole of human society. If you take one of these out of human life, the other that remains becomes unreal.³²¹

So, as we know from his other letter too, when he stresses the importance of the liberation of wide masses in Russia, their awakening, their involvement in culture, he says that all this has become possible *because of the destruction of greed as a result of the Revolution*.

I have repeatedly asked myself how such a stupendously wonderful thing could be made possible in Russia. The answer I have discovered within myself is that Russia is practically free from the least trace of opposition that emanates from *greed*.³²²

When I came to Russia and found this *greed* banished, I was naturally besides myself with joy.³²³

And his 'one-sidedness', we feel, gets lost in these assessments of his.

The Poet has some other critical remarks on these problems, available in almost all writing on his social outlook, and even

elsewhere,³²⁴ and we think, it is not necessary to reproduce here in full. Directly or indirectly, we have already touched them ; besides, these add nothing basically new to our opinions. Tagore, we feel, of course, knew that the struggles, violent too, were inevitable for the victory of the new.

We would only observe that such remarks were quite natural for the Poet who, from the core of his heart, wished the world had lesser sufferings.

The foremost attainment of new Russia Tagore, as we just said, regards *the destruction of what he calls greed* :

They have *ruthlessly brushed aside the very greed* that has, from the very beginning, been its most fatal opponent.³²⁵

This greed of greed is an anti-thesis to Tagore's humanist moral, the main principle of which is : "man's highest duty is service to society" :

The highest religion of man is his duty to human society. And *greed* is the greatest enemy of this religion.³²⁶

The destruction in Russia of *greed* as the main moving force of social development marks the beginning of a new period in the history of mankind :

Russia is engaged in making roads to a new cycle of existence. They are uprooting the roots of old laws and traditions from their old soil.³²⁷

Concluding, we may observe that Tagore is generally believed to be an admirer of the educational system of Soviet Russia. Yes, indeed. But not only this. If one reads all that has been cited above of Tagore, it is seen that this great success of education, as also the other successes, were the result of the total destruction of *greed*, that is, of the moral of the contemporary capitalist society. But Tagore could not say this bluntly in the conditions of the colonial regime in India. Of education he could still speak ; but not of the main thing. As he later ironically remarked in his letter of 28 July 1936 to Amiya Chakravarty, "to mention the name of Soviet Russia is a crime in this country (India)", but still I can't but do it."³²⁸

II. *On modern Western civilisation*

Tagore's statements on Western civilisation and on British rule in India (as we shall discuss in the next section) are a development of his ideas in *Nationalism*, this time still more lucid and more severe.

Capitalism, in its very origin, rejects virtually all morals. Where there is big profit, everything is allowed—plunder, loot, specially of the subjugated people.

The introduction to this age of commerce [Capitalism] was written with highway robberies. In the ghastly agony of the capture of slaves and the plunder of wealth in those days, Mother Earth did indeed cry out most bitterly. This cruel profession was especially carried on in foreign countries.³²⁹

The meanest methods were also of no consideration :

They did not shrink at adopting most dishonest methods ; for they wanted material success, and not the glory of the hero.³³⁰

Behind the garb of a gentleman was a scoundrel :

Highway robbery became respectable in a new garb.³³¹

In our days, the whole modern civilisation, with its mode of life, is also determined by unending *greed* and pursuit after wealth. *Greed* destroys human relations and leads to the decay of one's personality :

In this age of commerce that enemy—*greed*—is shaking human society to its very foundation, and is loosening and shattering to pieces all the ties of human relationship.³³² *Greed* of gold also forms the moral precepts of politicians :

The motive power behind modern politics is not glory of power ; but it is the *greed* of gold. We must always bear this in mind.³³³

This moral of politicians [of highway robbery], of course, destroys the relations between nations, endangering peace. This Tagore stressed with all the force and conviction in his farewell speech in Europe—in London, on 8 January 1931. Speaking on international relations, he says :

I am not competent to deal with international relationships between different countries, but, as I have said, your

politicians really represent the spirit of aggressiveness which leads towards separateness...I do not think it is right that the nations should be represented by their politicians in work which has for its object peace all through Europe. *To my mind it is like a band of robbers being asked to organize the police department.*³³⁴

Tagore has a clear notion of the inner processes in the development of the capitalist society. He knows that political life in the West is determined by the struggle between those who work and those who live on the fruit of their work :

In the West, a stupendous conflict between those who earn money [workers] and those who invest money [capitalists] has been going for some time.³³⁵

The struggle is merciless in character. Tagore sees how *greed* makes a man exploit and enslave those who work.

But the story of the present cleavage between the rich and the poor of the Western nations themselves is very cruel indeed. The difference becomes so aggressively prominent on account of the expensive standard of living and the oppression of the growing necessities of life.³³⁶

The vices of the capitalist society Tagore also knows from his readings of the best specimens of European realistic literature :

In the pages of European literature we find ample hair-raising descriptions of how ferocious became the disguised slavery, the untruth, and the cruelty of man after openly or stealthily reaching the factories, the mines, and the plantations through avenues of insatiable *greed*.³³⁷

Further, Tagore says that the burden of the working people in the East is much heavier than that in the West. For, in the West, as distinct from colonial countries, the production remains in the country and some portion of it is for the needs of the people.

At least a part of the wealth that is accumulated by the rich is automatically distributed in various forms amongst the people scattered all over the country.³³⁸

To conclude Tagore's views on the subject, we should say that this merchant-raj, the avidity of the merchants, has brought

numerous calamities and ruin to the peoples of Asia and Africa, and to the "Indians" in America, and, of course, also to India :

Then began the machine age ; and the percentage of profit grew incredibly high. Soon the epidemic of this plague of profit began to spread all over the world. And the alien and the distant races and nations became hopelessly helpless. China had to swallow opium ; India had to surrender her traditional wealth ; and the sorrows of Africa grew by leaps and bounds. This is the story of foreign countries.³³⁹

III. *On the British rule in India*

Before we pass on to Tagore's statements on the British rule in India, we would like first to note that while bitterly condemning the British merchants Tagore does not consider them the most blood-thirsty. The Spanish colonizers, for instance, literally destroyed the civilization of the Red Indians :

Spain not only gathered gold in Mexico ; but also wiped away its entire civilisation with human blood.³⁴⁰

There would also be a sea of blood if the Negroes decided to be free in America :

Suppose the Negroes of America, with pride and with perseverance, became engaged in the task of their separation from the United States of America ; then certainly, judging from what happens to the American Negroes in peace time, you would not need an extraordinary power of imagination to guess at the revolting scenes of torrential bloodshed.³⁴¹

But such judgements do not obscure from Tagore the fact that the *greed* of the British merchant-raj turned the once, fabulous rich country into horribly poor. Such a thing cannot be forgotten :

In those days India was world famous for her fabulous wealth... The tragic story of the hacking at the roots of the trees of wealth in India by her new commercial rulers has been told a hundred times. And it is ghastly to read and hear. But one cannot ignore these facts as ancient and hide them behind the mask of forgetfulness. The present hideous poverty of India began in those days.³⁴²

Tagore affirms that, right from the beginning, the basic policy of the British power was first to tear asunder and then to destroy completely India's capacity of production, on which depended the prosperity and welfare of India.

Tagore asserts that the *greed* of the British power managed to tear off the very roots of India's economy, thus rendering it feeble and degrading :

The present hideous poverty of India began in those days. India was glorious in her wealth. If we forget how that wealth has been transferred to the distant little island of England, then we ignore a vital factor in the modern history of the world... The *greed* of the British merchant-raj has absolutely crippled the various wealth-producing activities of India.³⁴³

Modern civilisation rests on machine production. Industrialisation is vital for the progress of any country. This is clearly seen from the example of Japan :

The struggle for existence itself is forcing every country to arduously follow this path. Within a very short time Japan has completely mastered modern machinery for the production of wealth.³⁴⁴

But the colonial regime does not allow India to develop into an industrialised country ; it wants her to remain rural and agricultural. For otherwise, it would be difficult for the raw materials to be sent to the metropolis :

The only thing that is left for us is agriculture. Otherwise, the supply of raw material will be stopped, and India cannot pay for the foreign goods she purchases.³⁴⁵

So, the basis of the economic policy of England in India is the sucking and looting of the resources of the "colony" on which the metropolis lives as a parasite :

Vast amounts of India's wealth are most thoroughly drained out of India. This is England's *greed-money*.³⁴⁶

In India the whole production is lost to the producers and to the country and goes out :

The jute farmers of Bengal are in the direct need of education and sanitation... But they receive absolutely nothing from the outgoing profits of the British jute merchants in India. These profits go out of India for ever.³⁴⁷

England lives on India's expense :

Our own money completely becomes English money . . . In fact, the unfortunate, the illiterate, the unhealthy and the dying India has for long silently supplied the means for the support of the schools and the hospitals of England.³⁴⁸

The Indian resources not only feed the schools and hospitals in England, but a significant portion of the production of the Indian people goes also for the maintenance of the very apparatus that guards the power in India herself, that keeps India fettered—that is, for the upkeep of the police, army, for the fat salaries and pensions of the big hosts of officials.

We have pawned our food and our clothing, our education and our intelligence to supply the police and the army with their salaries . . . We have to furnish the high salaries of these British officials in India, even from our savings for funeral expenses.³⁴⁹

Thus, though India produces a lot, she must live on mere crumbs :

But in India only the least of the leavings of the wealth that enriches the British merchants and the rulers falls to the lot of the people.³⁵⁰

The alien rulers neglect completely the needs of the native people and spare the most miserly sums for their education, health and welfare :

Every one knows of the miserable budget of the British government for the prolongation of our lives, and the decency of our living. We are without food, we are without education, we are without medical attention, and we are without pure drinking water ; but there is no dearth of policemen.³⁵¹

To conclude, we shall cite the results of the British rule in India, which Tagore arrives at. Blinded by *greed*, England is becoming richer by exploiting the labour of Indian producers :

If I want to paint a perfect picture of this situation, I cannot do better than to depict on the same canvas the parallel pictures of the ways of life and livelihood of both the farmers of Bengal that grow jute and the burlap manufacturers in Dundee, Scotland, who reap the harvests of

profit from jute. The tie that binds the two is the bond of *greed*.³⁵²

So in brief, the richer the England, the poorer the India :

For the last hundred and sixty years, the current of India's poverty in everything and the current of England's prosperity in everything have run side by side.³⁵³

The looting of India, as a result of tremendous *greed*, has led the country to the brink of ruin, to physical and moral degradation :

In the shadow of this gigantic *greed* of England, both our life and wealth began to fade...The daily livelihood of India hangs from this single, delicate thread...We are dying out both physically and mentally.³⁵⁴

But the alien rulers of India have no intention of doing anything for saving the country [i.e. India] :

The government is most indifferent in exerting the least effort in things which the people most vitally need—the things that will revitalize the nation in health, wealth, and mind.³⁵⁵

Greed is so inhuman that it even kills the hen that gives golden eggs :

Wealth is impersonal and it is very cruel. *Greed* not only gathers the golden eggs ; but it also slaughters the hen that lays them.³⁵⁶

But the means for saving the country are in the hands of the alien rulers :

The ways and the means by which we can save ourselves from utter ruination are not in our hands, but in theirs.³⁵⁷

And even from his own experience, Tagore comes to the conclusion that any cooperation with the British powers is impossible :

I have at last come to the conclusion that in any really worthy enterprise for the welfare of the nation, proper cooperation between our workers and the government is not at all possible.³⁵⁸

The country will be ruined. The means for saving it are in the hands of foreign rulers, and any cooperation with them is

impossible. There remains, therefore, only to wrest out these means from the hands of the aliens, whatever be the cost. How to do this, is mentioned by Tagore in his two other letters, written the same day, viz. on 28 October 1930—the last *Letters from Russia*.

The letter of 28 October 1930 to Sudhindranath Datta has different accents. It speaks directly of the need for irrevocable fight against the foreign rule. The letter had obviously been provoked by the report of very strained situation in India, and Tagore stresses in the letter that the British have now already lost their prestige in India :

...The British Empire is today despised by us and thus accursed. *Hatred* of their inequity will give us strength and by that we shall conquer...The British Ru'e has forfeited its honour.³⁵⁹

He warns that the fight will be stiff. He recalls his Russian experience and says :

I have recently returned from Russia : to some extent *I have clearly realised how difficult is the path of glory for our country*. The police beatings are a shower of flowers by comparison with the intolerable suffering that the devoted revolutionary workers in Russia have borne.

The glory that is India's today at home and abroad has been attained only by ignoring the beatings : let us never complain about our sufferings. To the last we must keep on saying : "We are not afraid..." Ignore, never imitate. The shedding of tears, never.³⁶⁰

Tagore pities himself for not being young :

My greatest regret is that I have not the strength of youth.³⁶¹

The last letter—one to Hembala Sen—is particularly interesting. It is not included in the *Letters from Russia* and obviously was not meant for publication. In this letter we can sense even more the living Tagore.

The letter shows Tagore's deep agony and anguish over the sufferings of his peoples in India and his tormented quest for ways to save the country. He stresses that no country reached pinnacle of success without going through great suffering :

One cannot have big results without giving a big price. It is only through great suffering that the country (USSR)

has attained its entity. We also will have to count away the last coin.³⁶²

As in the letter to Sudhindranath Datta, here, too, Tagore recalls how hard was the path of the Russian revolutionaries :

In Russia I have seen the contours of that extremely difficult path. That's what is in my mind even if not adequate.

And suggests that India should gain from their experience :

See, read the history of Russian Revolution.³⁶³

With her countless illiterate masses, with age-old prejudices and superstitions, India is now literally in a dying condition. Tagore stresses that she can now be saved only through a special cure :

Our country can be saved from its agonising state only by that skilled, experienced physician (*sahasra-mari*) who brings a patient back to life from his dying condition, by inflicting a lot of pain. That's why if the patient gives expression to his pain, it is a matter of shame for him.

These lines echo the heroic struggle which the participants of the civil disobedience movement against the British imperialists were waging at this time, and which so agitated Tagore :

I wonder how long my weak heart will bear this sorrow of my country.³⁶⁴

Recalling the task before him—that of gathering means for Santiniketan, he confesses that he does not like asking for resources ; this is unmanly :

I don't like begging. Even dacoity is better, at least there is manliness in it.³⁶⁵

Nonetheless he also thinks how to open a college for the Bengali girls—a problem so dear to him. Means or no means, he is ready for any sacrifice :

I have been driven to go out [finding funds], to establish a womens' college. If I gather enough, I shall give all this onto the women of my homeland as my last gift—the gift of knowledge.³⁶⁶

On feeling slightly better Tagore comes over to Philadelphia for further rest. In his letter of 31 October 1930 written from here to his son, he again muses over the Soviet Russia :

This time in Russia I have seen with my own eyes the shape of things which I had dreamt of so long.³⁶⁷

After what he has seen there, that is, in the Soviet Russia, he feels ashamed even to think of his *zamindari* business and to think that his upbringing had been like a parasite :

That is why I feel so ashamed about the *zamindari* business...I had long nourished a deep repugnance for that business of *zamindari*, now it has become more solid. My mind has today left the upper seat and has taken a place below. I feel sad that from my childhood I have been brought up as a parasite.³⁶⁸

His aversion to *zamindari* now is so great that he even thinks of selling away his Calcutta house as this would solve many problems :

If it is not so difficult to sell our Calcutta house, then what is the harm in selling it? That would take a big burden off!³⁶⁹

The Poet now sees his main work in Sriniketan ; and this is where the Russian experience can be of immense use. It is necessary to go there and study this experience :

I have realized this well—our greatest work lies in Sriniketan. To solve in small measure the problem as to how our entire country can be saved, this is the task we have accepted.

Had you come to Russia, you would have gained much experience along these lines.³⁷⁰

Alongwith this, he writes that the country is now at a turning point, and it is necessary to choose the correct path. However, as in the previous letter, he cautions that the path would be full of hardships :

Meanwhile, a new chapter has dawned in our history...

The time has come for a basic change in our livelihood

...In a crucial stage of history all must suffer, already they have to do so, it is folly to hope for comfort by evading the crisis.³⁷¹

In the letter Tagore also expresses his hopes for a better sale of his paintings at the exhibition in New York where, he says, he intends to arrive. In the beginning there were some hopes from his forthcoming meeting with Rockefeller ; but these hopes, we know, were not justified.

Tagore's visits abroad—to the Soviet Russia, USA and other countries—were broadly covered by the press in India and abroad.

Thus, the news of Tagore's serious illness in USA deeply agitated India. The country heaved a sigh of relief on getting Dr. Harri Timbers' telegram that there was no cause for anxiety. But "The Modern Review" immediately published a note expressing anger and disgust on this unexplained conduct of an American doctor and on the efforts of some circles, who feared Tagore's statements, to see him out of America :

The minds of the people of India were agitated at the alarming news relating to R. Tagore's health, sent by Reuter from America... This was supplemented by another which was still more alarmingly worded. It was to the effect that a certain Doctor Marvin has said that he had not overestimated but rather underestimated the seriousness of the Poet's state of health. Then came a cable to Santiniketan from Dr. Timbers. It stated that, though his heart's weakness necessitated rest, anxiety was not necessary.

It is not quite clear why Dr. N. M. Marvin added that 'he has understated, rather than overstated, the seriousness of the situation'. The wise physicians do not frighten patients or their relatives and friends. While we certainly long for the Poet's speedy return to India in a good state of health, we do not quite appreciate any stranger's desire to hurry him out of America.

There may be persons in America who may have, say, a sub-conscious desire that Rabindranath Tagore should leave America very early... there is naturally a fear in the minds of British imperialists and propagandists and their friends in America that, though he will not, on his own accord, speak on current Indian politics, anything coming from him relating to that topic through newspaper interviews and drawing room talk may prejudice British interests.

This very issue of "The Modern Review" also reproduced talk Tagore had given at the Dom Soyuzov and his interview with the "Izvestiya" correspondent.

The December issue of "The Modern Review" published numerous materials concerning Tagore's visit to Soviet Russia,—for instance, the text of his talks with Dr. Petrov and other cultural and public figures ; and his talk with the Pioneers, and, alongside these, also reproduced an excellent article on Tagore taken from the October issue of an American journal. This article, though rich in content, and different from the generally second-rate articles then being published in the USA on Tagore, was not somehow noted by either Stephen Hay or Sujit Mukherjee.

The editor of the American journal had written :

The arrival in this country of Rabindranath Tagore, India's great poet, and one of the great poets of the modern world, is an occasion of impressive significance. It comes here at a moment when his native land is in the throes of a revolt against the British crown. On this movement for independence long maturing in the heart of the Indian people, Tagore is one of the most important and influential leaders. He shares with Gandhi that predominance of intellectual and spiritual authority which has united India in aspiration and sacrifice and lifted the nation to sudden consciousness of its high destiny...

Tagore sings songs of love and liberty which find their way into the hearts of even the lowliest of Indian and conjure there the dreams of a free and happy land. What can the noble presence of this man not do to win sympathy and support for his hard-pressed countrymen ?³⁷³

* * *

During these days, the world press widely circulated the review article published by an influential, popular American journal, "The Literary Digest", on 1 November, 1930, under the catching headline "Tagore, Russia's Friend", with a photograph of the Poet amongst Moscow Pioneers. This article was a review of the interviews given by Tagore in October to the American newspapers "New York American", "New York Herald Tribune", and "New York Times".

The American journal comes to the proper conclusion :

Tagore might be accepted by Soviet Russia as its most effective propagandist.³⁷⁴

The article begins, stressing that Tagore looks much younger than his years :

Tagore may be sixty-nine years old, but his clear smooth skin, his piercing brown eyes, and his nervous little hands belie such an age.

Further, the author of the Review asserts :

Politics and economics are not in his line ; education and faith are his panaceas for a troubled world.³⁷⁵

As we have seen, this is not quite so.

Here we shall touch upon only such passages in this article which are of most immediate interest.

In the interview to Gobind Behari Lal, the correspondent of the "New York American", Tagore said among other things :

Russia has wrought a miracle.

And he exp'ained :

I found these plain Russian people crowding concert-halls and museums, theatres, and all centres of cultural life. What has been done in Russia during the last eight or ten years past seems to us in India nothing short of a stupendous miracle...

In India only 5 per cent of the people are even nominally literate, not educated, just literate. Russia was no better ten years ago...

Formerly, racial and religious conflicts were common in Russia as they are in India up to this day. Now, in Russia, all these conflicts have disappeared. Jews, Armenians, Christians, and Moslems have learned to cooperate. It is the Russian method of enlightening the people that interests me.

Tagore sums up his interview in such beautiful words :

The Russians are not believers in old theologies. Service of mankind might be their religion.³⁷⁶

To the Correspondent of the "New York Herald Tribune", Tagore, in addition to what he had already said, stresses the development of the new world of art in Soviet Russia.

Creative Art is thriving in Russia. The theatres are crowded with people who ten years ago had no opportunity to enter them.

In his interview to the "New York Times", Tagore said that the peasants of modern Russia had become far closer to supreme truth than those under the Czarist rule :

Those peasants in Russia today with their education and self-respect realize more fully than the downtrodden, illiterate serf of a Czarist regime that the multitude which moves in this ever-moving world is permeated by one Supreme Truth.³⁷⁷

A portion of the Review is taken up by Tagore's account of Visva Bharati :

It was with the desire to help my people realize this supreme truth that I founded Visva Bharati. It is a school and university combined where the classes are conducted in just such surroundings as these in which the ancient forest dwellers of India realized the spirit of harmony with the universe...

And for this, as Mr. Woolf, the "New York Times" correspondent, tells us ; Tagore has given out his own estate :

In order to accomplish this, the Poet has turned over to the institute his estate at Santiniketan, the Nobel Prize money and the income from all of his Bengali works. The Quakers here and in England have helped him and so have one or two private individuals, but for the most part, it is his donations that have kept the undertaking going.³⁷⁸

This very write-up was republished, for instance, on 13 December, 1930, under the caption "Russia's Indian Friend" in the newspaper 'Star' from Johannesburg S.A., and on 22 December, 1930, under the caption "Tomorrow Shall Be Ours" in the 'Daily News from Colombo, Ceylon'. This latter reportage also adds Tagore's words that in the sphere of education the Russians are trying to do what Mahatma Gandhi is doing in India—to teach them self-respect :

I found education where there had been ignorance, and I found what is the essential basis of all education—self-respect. That is what our great Mahatma in India is endeavouring to do, to teach people to respect themselves to realize their own part in the great scheme of the universe.³⁷⁹

Expounding the essence of these statements of Tagore in Moscow, A. G. Shelley published in the "Scottish Educational Journal", Edinburgh, on 12 December 1930, an interesting article under the title "Rabindranath Tagore and Education in Russia", in which the author quotes Tagore as saying, among other things that the Soviet methods of education will be very useful to other countries :

Like Dr. George S. Counts, the Professor of Education at Columbia University, who visited Russia early in the year, the Poet feels that the Soviet methods of education would be of great benefit in other countries, "where there is so much in education that is merely academic and abstract. Yours is much more practical, and therefore truly moral, and it is closer in touch with the varied aspect and purposes of life."³⁸⁰

The article further states that Tagore greatly appreciates what the Soviets are doing :

Dr. Tagore left Moscow full of admiration for all that they were doing to free those who were in slavery, to lowly and oppressed, and to "bring help to those who were utterly helpless, reminding them that the source of their salvation lies in a proper education and their power to combine their human resources."³⁸¹

The Soviet press too, of course, reacted to Tagore's statements. Thus, the newspapers "Izvestia", on 4 November 1930, wrote among other things

In an interview with a representative of the American newspaper "New York Times" Rabindranath Tagore stated that...he was particularly amazed by the programme of people's education in USSR...He noted also that in the Soviet Union 'there is no racial hostility and there is perfect peace amongst the various peoples of the USSR'.

The VOKS has received a letter from Tagore, in which he, expressing his warm gratitude for the hospitality shown to him in Moscow, writes : "My association with your people and acquaintance with solely cultural and educational institutions of your city will remain one of the most significant events of my life."

Rabindranath Tagore also informs that he has started writing on account of his stay in USSR, and intends to send the manuscript to VOKS as soon as it is translated into English.³⁸²

The Soviet press did not publish any detailed comments, obviously not wishing to make the Poet's position complex.

Recovering from his illness, Tagore returned to New York on 3 November 1930. But, almost up to the end of the month, as Nepal Mazumdar notes, "no American intellectual, no public figure, no high official of the State Department organised any formal, official reception in his honour."³⁸³

As before, Tagore was again assailed by press correspondents to elicit his views on contemporary situation in India. But, because of his earlier unhappy experience of the American press, Tagore was not prepared to trust them, and would not give his opinions except at a properly organised press conference. He gave, for the press conference, a written statement on the movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, in which he called Gandhi a great leader and stressed the loftiness of the principle of non-violence over the primitive mentality of the Western politicians :

I am proud that my countrymen today under their great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, have disdained to initiate the violent methods of the modern military nations in their struggle for freedom, but have made moral integrity and the spirit of sacrifice the directive power of their non-violent movement.³⁸⁴

He was confident, the movement would lead to the freedom of India. He voiced his firm support of the non-cooperation movement and of Mahatma Gandhi, and noted the mental superiority of the participants of this movement over their opponents.

By accepting spiritual force, as their chief weapon they have already proved their superiority to the primitive mentality of unashamed pillage and man-slaughter which persists in most countries today, and I have no doubt that if our countrymen can keep fast to this heroism of non-violence in spite of violent provocation they will have no difficulty in establishing freedom which is already theirs

in so far as they are true to their central [[ideal of non-violence].³⁸⁵

In an open letter to the "Spectator" published on 15 November 1930, around the time of the Round Table Conference, Tagore expressed his views on this subject, highly praising Mahatma Gandhi :

A miracle has happened through the magical touch of Mahatma's own indomitable spirit and his courageous faith in human nature.³⁸⁶

In his broadcast of 10 November 1930 from the New York Radio Tagore explained the aims and objects of his University at Santiniketan, and hoped to count on his listeners' response. Tagore's hopes, however, did not yield much fruit.

During these days an exhibition of Tagore's paintings was also opened at New York. As already mentioned by us, Tagore pinned some hopes on this exhibition for finding funds for Santiniketan, and had expected it to be more successful than the one at Boston. The expectations, as far as known, were, however, belied.

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But Tagore was not allowing his time to be taken up only by press interviews or talks, he was concerned with many vital tasks and problems. We can partly follow his train of thought by analysing the letters he wrote around this time.

On 11 November 1930 Tagore writes to Nirma'akumari Mahalanobis that he has come to the USA at a wrong time—when the country is passing through a crisis. In the Poet's words, "America did not pass through such an acute financial crisis for a long time."³⁸⁷

The letter shows how the Poet is torn between his sense of aversion to asking for funds and his need to keep his institution going :

If I free myself from this determination of mine, for I do not like it, I shall be left with a sense of regret for ever.³⁸⁸

This very idea Tagore also reiterates in his letter of 21 November to his son. Rathindranath. Tagore writes how he is being told that he has not come to America at a proper time. But this time too, in his quest of a solution to the problem, Tagore turns to the experience of the Soviet Russia. He also

now wonders whether it would at all be proper to have large sums of money from America, for these would not be without strings :

If we got such fat sums from here [America], we would get tied in a very big way to this chain of money. And we would have to remain under their surveillance and under their point of view.³⁸⁹

And, in its turn, the experience of Soviet Russia has taught that even with small resources, put to proper use, one can achieve a lot :

If you could come to Russia, you would have understood that there are many things to do. Even a small resource can do [much] if one has intelligence, energy and faith in oneself.³⁹⁰

What Tagore writes further on in the letter shows that he has more faith in human capability than in big sums of money :

If we get plenty of money, it will show our incapability all the more.³⁹¹

Of great interest and significance is Tagore's letter of 22 November 1930, again to Nirmalakumari Mahalonobis.

In this letter, Tagore appears to be having a second look on his whole life, his whole creative path, as if reassessing his whole work. He finds himself different from what he was. Apparently, it is difficult for him to recognise his own self.

Tagore seems to be passing through a spiritual crisis, as it were,—reminding us of Leo Tolstoy of 1880's when he wrote his 'sermons' and after the essay *What is Art*?, which, we shall remember, had so evoked Tagore's interest.

Tagore writes :

The other day I had read a book *Letters to a Friend*, written by a gentleman called Rabindranath Tagore. I felt, I knew him once, but leaving him at some crossing. I have come along a still new path. For many days I got no news of him. Do you know who this man is, who wrote *Gitanjali*, sitting on the roof, at Santiniketan, who wrote *The Post Office*?³⁹²

Then, in those palaces, it was all high, clear, but now here, it is all so intricate, so complex as life itself :

Tired, I ask Rabindranath : 'Where has your kingly palace gone?' 'Very far... On whole, I was then in the

palace, now I have come to crowds haphazard...it was easy to recognise the man of that time, it is difficult to recognise the man of today...his face is mixed up with the plain people, ... and bears the imprint of their hopes and aspirations.³⁹³

At last, as states Stephen Hay :

The leading Americans now became aware for the first time of the political significance of Tagore's visits to the U.S. [emphasis mine—author].

As a result, a ceremonial aspect was introduced into this last visit which had not previously been present... and the British ambassador arranged to bring Tagore to the White House for a call on President Hoover³⁹⁴ ...

But, as writes J. L. Dees in *Tagore and America*, the official publication of USIS :

The audience lasted but a few minutes, and the nature of the conversation between the Poet and the President was never revealed.³⁹⁵

Besides this brief meeting with the President, there were also arranged a ceremonial banquet in his honour, two of his lectures and a concert in Broadway and, of course, the inevitable meetings with the press.

We shall see later from Tagore's two letters that these meetings, despite attracting big crowds were not to his taste and even made him unhappy.

In his doctoral dissertation on the subject, Sujit Mukherjee also shares these feelings :

In spite of the glamorous banquets, the teeming audiences and the personal encounters Tagore was unable to shake off the feeling that once again he had become an object of curiosity and spectacle, rather than the subject of thought and self-searching among Americans towards a gradual realisation of Tagore's ideals.

Neither did he feel encouraged that his more immediate aims—world peace, Indian emancipation, development of Visva Bharati—were being served, though these had the fullest sympathy of his sponsors.

It cannot be mere accident that the subject of his last speech in America should have been the first and last great prophets of Persia, a subject so far removed from his usual and oft repeated concerns.

*It did not seem to matter, either to him, or to his audience, what he said . . . [emphasis mine—author]*³⁹⁶

As we feel, Tagore these days was looked upon in America as some sensational miracle, some mystic who, for reasons unknown, was praising the godless Bolsheviks. The idea of his Visva Bharati—the meeting of the East and the West—was very, very far from his audience.

Tagore's frank, bold statements at all these gatherings,—as Nepal Mazumdar rightly notes,—evoked shabby abuses from the American press.

Still earlier, in the eyes of the most conservative Americans, Tagore “lost some of his name” ; and as an official publication of the U.S. State Department, in its own language, puts it :

Some felt that by thus giving a one-sided picture of Communist Russia, the Poet was lending the prestige of his name to . . . pro-Soviet propaganda . . . his appraisal of a ‘single facet’ of Soviet Society, was bewildering to many Americans.³⁹⁷

Here, by the way, we cannot but express our surprise over the fact that the American scholar, Professor Stephen Hay, for describing the American reaction to Tagore's visit to the Soviet Russia, should be ignoring the main press reports (some of which we have cited above) and quoting in his work, a statement from a certain third-rate ‘yellow’ newspaper, “praising Tagore for his courage to beard the lion in his den.”³⁹⁸

The facts, though, reveal that it was the other way round—Tagore indeed had the courage to bear all that he got in the U.S.A. Nowhere did Tagore feel himself so at home, safe and inspired as in Russia.

On 25 November 1930, in the evening, Tagore was to attend a ceremonial reception arranged in his honour. And in his letter that day to Pratima Devi, he confesses his dislike of such banquets :

There is a reception this evening. Around 500 people will join to felicitate me. Nobody will understand what a great ordeal this is for me.³⁹⁹

He goes on to describe the way of life in America :

This country has a terrible passion for exaggerating everything. And one wishing to do any work carries with him instruments of exaggeration. This is called publicity.⁴⁰⁰ Tagore feels, he is a misfit amidst such an environment :

[This publicity] means to go on crying aloud : 'Turn and look at me. Thousands and thousands of people are crying aloud like this.

Ah, why am I amidst them ? What is my crime [to deserve all this] ?⁴⁰¹

The Poet feels, he cannot any more afford to have attraction for publicity :

Rabindranath Tagore is a very big prophet, philosopher—It is no more possible to have attraction for such useless things.⁴⁰²

He would rather prefer to have his seclusion, to devote himself to his art—to painting. He would give anything to be able to escape from all this :

I shall make all amends for being able to take leave [from this country] and be free.⁴⁰³

These were not idle reflections ; we learn from this letter that Tagore has already decided to be aboard s.s. "Bremen" on 27 November to sail away from America. It is not known what detained him.

In the evening that day, a ceremonial reception was organised under the auspices of the American India Society and Tagore Reception Committee at Baltimore Hotel. More than 350 people were present,—among them Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, and Sinclair Lewis, the Nobel laureate.

Tagore began his after-dinner speech, referring to the meeting of the East and the West :

I have come to you to ask for the inter-change of the spiritual treasures and cultural cooperation between the East and the West.⁴⁰⁴

But soon he switched over to his criticism of the Western civilisation :

The age belongs to the West... But you have exploited those who are helpless and humiliated who are unfortunate with this gift. A great portion of the world suffers from your civilisation.⁴⁰⁵

This after-dinner speech, and the interview Tagore gave next day to the "New York Times" correspondent were too bitter a dose for the conservative American circles.

As noted by Nepal Mazumdar, this speech by the Poet and his earlier statements incurred the wrath of the papers run by the American capitalist groups, which started spreading all sorts of calumnies about the Poet, in most indecent language. This made the British journalists quite happy. Because the Poet's condemnation of the British rule in India and support of the Indian national liberation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi had already greatly irritated the many British journalists accredited to America.⁴⁰⁶

Tagore had impressed his point with all force that if the British were not prepared to yield, the continued struggle called Revolution was inevitable :

Of course we want a great deal more freedom politically than we have ; we want to serve our country and all depends on how much they will give us. If they do not give us what we want, there will be a perpetual struggle, for there is no chance of this Revolution, if it can be called a revolution, dying of old age.⁴⁰⁷

There was an immediate reaction to Tagore's statements ; and the conservative American press came out with writings, supporting and even justifying the need of the British rule in India :

Tagore... has the colossal nerve to tell us what a terrible thing Western civilisation is for the oppressed races of the East. His own India is kept from going to complete smash only by the power and justice of Britain, as he knows.⁴⁰⁸

Obviously, the British press was quite happy with such writings, and reported these under striking captions in bold letters. *The Sunday Chronicle*, for instance, wrote :

Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and mystic, has arrived in New York to tell the Americans what a holy man he is and to denounce British rule in India. But he has received a shock. His reception has been cool and hostile. This is due partly to the shortage of dollars, but largely also to American sympathy with Britain's efforts to deal with the troubles in India.⁴⁰⁹

When the American press tried indirectly to offend Tagore by publishing hyperbolic accounts of the position of the untouchables in India, he said to the *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent :

It amuses me to read in your papers, the talk about untouchables of India. You approach the subject as though it were something unimaginable. Yet in your own country you have the same thing. The Negroes are your untouchables.⁴¹⁰

We may note here that some 'yellow' journalists even tried to portray Tagore as a crank ; but we do not consider proper to reproduce such unbecoming reports here.

Some prestigious papers, like the 'New York Times', fabricated sensational lies—for instance, that 'Santiniketan was being maintained by his wife, an American'!!⁴¹¹

We know how while voicing his deep admiration for the Soviet Russia, Tagore talked of their spirit of self sacrifice, their concern not only for their own country but for the entire suffering humanity. Tagore himself had a great concern for the peoples of the whole world. His comments on the Palestinian problem, for instance, show how far sighted he was [This was an acute, widely discussed problem even of those days] :

The Palestine problem cannot be solved in London by any negotiations between the British Government and the Zionist leaders... This can be obtained in Palestine only by means of a direct understanding between the Arabs and the Jews.

If the Zionist leadership will insist on separating Jewish political and economic interests in Palestine from those of the Arabs ugly eruptions will occur in the Holy Land.⁴¹² Tagore proposes his own solution to this problem :

Forget the Western conception of prestige and pride and keep on working with this end in view : A Palestine Commonwealth in which Arabs and Jews will live their own distinct cultural and spiritual lives. Then you will, you must succeed.⁴¹³

At long last, after a long wait, Tagore's first lecture in USA was arranged on 1st December at Carnegie Hall. The topic of the lecture was "East and West", and it had been sponsored by the Discussion Guild and Indian Society. There was a crowd of about 4,000 persons,—some of them eager more to look at the Poet than to listen to him, as seen afterwards by the general reaction of the American public.

Tagore began his lecture by saying that the West has given great ideas of freedom of peoples, of self-determination of nations, but regretted that it did not apply these ideas in its attitude towards the peoples of the East. That's why, he thinks, the West did not properly respond to the Indian national liberation movement.

He again stresses his old idea that the West recognises only power :

Our appeal does not reach you, because you respond only to power. Japan appealed to you and answered because she was able to prove she could make herself as obnoxious as you can.⁴¹⁴

Tagore asks if the West knows what the peoples of the East think of them, what a danger they pose to mankind, and how ruinous their mentality is to the East :

And what is the harvest of your civilisation ? You do not see from the outside. You do not realize what a terrible menace you have become to man. We are afraid of you. And everywhere people are suspicious of each other.⁴¹⁵

He emphasizes that the countries of the West are preparing for war because they are full of evil and hatred :

*All the great countries of the West are preparing for war, (emphasis mine.—author), for some great work of desolation that will spread poison all over the world. And this poison is within their own selves.*⁴¹⁶

Further on, he adds that with this attitude of mutual suspicion it was not possible to have any effective results :

Their minds [that is, of the countries of the West] are filled with mutual suspicion and hatred and anger, and yet they try to invent some machinery which will solve the difficulties. They ask for disarmament, but it cannot be had from the outside. They have efficiency, but that alone does not help.⁴¹⁷

Well aware that his statement were falling mostly only on deaf ears and that it mattered little what he spoke, Tagore, on the initiation of the New History Society, agreed to speak next 7 December, on a topic far removed from the current stream of events—'the prophet Zoroaster'.

Here it may be mentioned that there is no record of Tagore's meeting with any famous American writer, with the exception of Sinclair Lewis (already mentioned).

No details are available, again, on Poet's meetings with any eminent American intellectuals. In America, he met only the famous German scientist, Einstein, (this meeting was reported in the "Literary Digest" of 3 January 1931).

Only towards the end of his stay was some theatrical performance arranged for him—a dance drama of Tagore was performed at the Broadway theatre, with the participation of the well-known danseuse Ruth St. Denis. Here, the Poet himself read some of his poems. This meeting with the American artists was warm, friendly—one sweet drop in an ocean of otherwise indifference and miscarried curiosity.

We know, Tagore's mission of finding resources in the wealthy America, for his institution at Santiniketan, seemed almost to have been a failure. Still, as quoted by USIS in the "New York Times" of 15 December, "at the expressed wish of Sir Rabin-dranath, the proceeds from the [Broadway] performances were to be donated to a fund for the relief of New York City's unemployed."

It was Tagore's farewell gift to America . . .

* * *

The Poet sailed away from the American shores on 18 December, arriving in London on the 22nd.

In London, as far as we know, the Poet had virtually no set appointments or engagements, except one lecture arranged almost on the eve of his departure from there.

During these days, he writes a letter, on 27/29 December, to Nirmalakumari Mahalanobis, which being a sort of a generalisation of his impressions of America, is of special interest.

He starts his letter as to how free he felt in Europe, and how burdened in America :

The days I was in Europe, I liked.

Going to America, the mind, though, got depressed. The body too got a big jolt.⁴¹⁸

Further, he conveys his perception of how unrefined and tiring the life is in America :

In America I found the external things too sharp and restless.

Being here for some time one feels a great aversion.

I am in that state of mind ; and too eager to find refuge in my inner self⁴¹⁹

He emphasizes the emptiness, meaninglessness and hypocrisy of the American way of life, where the trivial is given out as too significant :

There [in America] I saw the futility of how man has made the society narrow-minded and impoverished, covering the filth and debris with a show of pomp and grandeur. And they, day in and day out, are pursuing that end—loading sky-high heaps of burden on earth⁴²⁰ . . .

We have surveyed Tagore's visit to America in detail, for as even American scholars have noted, he was greatly struck by the contrast between the two countries. In our opinion, it was a contrast between the two civilisations,—one based on greed ; and the other which had been able to do away with it. So his impressions of America help us to understand more deeply his impressions of Soviet Russia.

To some people it might seem a paradox ; but Tagore's visit to America immediately after his trip to Russia, we feel, only strengthened his faith in the new Russia.

The American way of life based on pursuit of dollar, with its skill to make the trivial look significant, with its hypocrisy,

prevalence of mutual suspicion in the society, was totally alien to Tagore's humanism. This is why he felt so depressed here, though, of course, he valued the care of his American friends.

At the same time we know that Tagore greatly appreciated his visit to Soviet Russia, and even called it a 'pilgrimage'.

He, to his last days, remained a most sincere, true friend of the Soviet Union, no matter what critical observations, we repeat, he may have casually made.

In Soviet Russia Tagore saw the future of mankind. He saw that the Soviet Russia had realized on a massive scale what he himself was striving to do at Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

He advised his friends that the proper training needed for India could be had only in Soviet Russia. In his letter to Dorothy, the wife of his American friend Elmhirst, for instance, he asks her to have no misgivings about sending her husband to the Soviet Union for training :

Dear Dorothy,

Being as lazy in my letter writing enterprises, as you are, and Leonard, I cannot give you the details of my adventure in Soviet Russia. It has been a most wonderful experience for me and I assure you, those people have done a miracle in the realm of education. I implore you, do not hesitate to send Leonard to that country which is the only place where all the numerous activities of the peoples' life are comprehended in a most intensive and intelligent form of education.

I find that you have sent Lal [Dr. Premchand Lal, who was at the time the Director of the Visva Bharati Institute of Rural reconstruction, Sriniketan] to the US for his further training, but the proper training for Indians can only be had in Russia.⁴²¹

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There is a great deal still to be analysed and a lot to be said on this subject, but this cannot obviously be done within the space of this one-volume study.

Further, we shall restrict ourselves only to some statements of Tagore on the Soviet Russia. And this, generally, in the context of the worsening world situation that time.

In detail we would wish to speak only of Tagore's friendship and correspondence with Nikolai Roerich, the Russian thinker and artist. The correspondence between these two great men which we shall partly reproduce here, is almost not available in any study of Tagore in India or the West. Only recently, some excerpts from it were published by the eminent Soviet scholar and journalist, Dr. Leonid Mitrokhin.⁴²²

This correspondence is important not only because it shows the friendship between a great Indian and a great Russian but also because, it brings to focus the acute questions of struggle for peace against the barbarities of wars. We see from this correspondence that with all the differences in their individuality and way of thinking, the two great men had a very deep common humanist base.

The last lecture of Tagore in London was arranged at Hyde Park Hotel on the initiative of "All Peoples' Association".

At this lecture, Tagore was introduced by Evelyn Wrench, the Editor of "The Spectator". The Poet was requested to speak on "International Goodwill Relation".⁴²³

This farewell lecture of Tagore was marked by an unexpectedly sharp (even for the Poet) criticism of the morality of modern politicians of the West. He, as we have already quoted, said that to entrust the destinies of peoples to them was like asking a band of robbers to organise a police department.

In England, apparently, Tagore did not feel so helpless or weighed down as in America. Those who attended his lectures came to listen and not simply to look at him, and gave him a hearty applause for his critical comments. Among the audience was the famous writer, G. B. Shaw, who, after the lecture, greeted Tagore and spoke, sharing his views :

You know, I have always been telling my people not to listen to politicians. I have tried to do this in my writings. But you know what uphill work it is to convince people against their own will.⁴²⁴

This means, the audience included intellectuals who shared Tagore's convictions.

Tagore's statements were an appeal to all people with good will in the West not to listen to their politicians, not to pin their hopes on the League of Nations (as he stressed in his lecture), but to unite their efforts to save the peoples from the impending threat of fascism and a new war.

Next day, on 9 January, Tagore sailed off on s.s. "Narkanda" to India. Before leaving, on this day, he sent a letter (written by Amiya Chakravorty) to his Russian friends in VOKS.

Amiya Chakravorty wrote to Petrov that Tagore was feeling well, and cherished most pleasant memories of his inspiring visit to Russia, and that the articles written by him on this trip would soon be translated from Bengali to English :

We arrived here only for a few days way back from America, and are leaving for India today. I am happy to assure you that, despite our recent fatiguing travels in USA, Dr. Tagore feels well and shall sail back to India with pleasant memories of the recent visit. . . to Russia. As you know, Dr. Tagore narrated a lot about his very inspiring visit to your country. The articles on this trip which he wrote in Bengali will be soon translated into English.⁴²⁵

Just before his arrival in India, on the ship, the Poet learnt that Gandhi and Nehru had been released from jail on 26 January.

Was this just a simple coincidence ?

The Poet arrived in Bombay on 30 January 1931, only to be again mobbed at once by press reporters with the same usual questions on his impressions of his visit to the USSR, his opinion of the Indian national-liberation movement. In his interview published in the "Times of India" on 31 January, he said that the attention of the whole world was now focussed on India and that it was the moral significance of the movement of non-cooperation that was most valuable to him.

Talking of the difficulties in the way of the movement, he noted that the most serious of these was that of differences between the Hindus and the Muslims ; and stressed that all conflicts on the communal basis had been ended in Russia in just eight years or so :

In Russia where only a few years ago there were constant fights between Armenians and Mohamedans, between Christians and Jews, all such conflicts have utterly ceased.⁴²⁶

He also noted with enthusiasm the striking achievements of Soviet Russia in spreading mass education and in the work of socialist construction."⁴²⁷

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From Bombay he left for Santiniketan ; and straightaway on 6 February itself spoke to the workers of the Sriniketan rural development centre, and again on 7 February to the dwellers of the villages around.

He did not directly name Soviet Russia ; but, the publisher, in "Visva Bharati", of the English translation of the *Letters from Russia*, notes, his speeches reflected his Russian ex. experience :

In this address and the one that follows (delivered to villagers gathered at Sriniketan's anniversary) local problems are discussed in the light of experiences gathered in Russia.⁴²⁸

He tells the rural population that the people in the West, despite their wealth and vast scientific achievements, are not happy ; and live in constant fear of war :

One thing I must tell you...I have never expected to see so much inner suffering in the West. The people are not happy. No doubt, they have multiplied luxury enormously and all manner of paraphernalia has been created, but a deep unrest, a deep unhappiness has seized them everywhere...

They are terrified : a dreadful orgy of destruction may be let loose at any moment.⁴²⁹

They, Tagore adds, have invented machines to create wealth, and have been able to subjugate other peoples but they have lost the foremost value of life, that is humanism :

The vehicle of wealth is the machine, whereas the vehicle of the machine is man, thousands, even hundreds of thousands men...

The power that grows stronger through the machine has thus enabled him (the man) to conquer the world, to subdue legions of strangers into slavery.⁴³⁰

And this dehumanisation of society makes human being a weapon of exploitation, used for mass killing of people in war :

They have arisen out of wealth. It is quite easy for man to take these as final achievements. He cannot help thinking so. To these he has sold his precious possession, which is human relationship... But if, with the expansion of this power, the field which favours the cultivation of human relations grows continually narrower, it turns into a weapon of death for man, forges weapons to kill him and conspires to bring about his ruin ; manufactures multitudes of lies, fosters cruelty and sows the seed of the poison tree....

He does not see human beings but only the machines in them.⁴³¹

In his speech before the Sriniketan workers Tagore particularly emphasized the inseparable bond of an individual with the collective, and the fact that the means and the capacities of each individual taken separately must be merged with the resources and powers of the other people :

The individual perfection cannot be complete. The powers of those who have been accepted most by the mankind were expressed through the power of all. And where the people are in bonds, where the collaboration is not intense, there is barbarism.

The aim of a cultured, civilised man is to affirm personal values by aligning them with the values of all, by uniting personal power with the power of all, to perfect his soul by perfecting all.⁴³²

In 1931, Santiniketan, like the whole of India and like the people of good will all over the world, made preparations to observe the 70th birth anniversary of the revered and loved teacher and poet. The international committee formed included Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Romain Rolland and Einstein, and it was decided to publish a felicitation volume under the title *The Golden Book of Tagore*.⁴³³

The Soviet friends too took the most active part in these preparations. Professor Kogan contributed to the felicitation volume. He wrote in particular :

It must have seemed that Tagore avoiding all political struggle, absorbed in his deep meditation, must be foreign to us and far away from our life which is spent in an atmosphere of stormy political discussions and feverish reconstructions. But it is an error . . .

The Revolution is not a destroyer, on the contrary the proletariat looks upon itself as the lawful heir who is called to translate these ideas into life.

That is why the songs of Tagore are resounding in our hearts as a beautiful call for liberation.⁴³⁴

The composer Vasilenko sent music notes newly composed on Tagore's words, and these were also published in the *Golden Book of Tagore*.⁴³⁵

Professor Petrov from VOKS also sent a telegram of congratulations, heartily wishing him every success in his works :

My warm greetings to Rabindranath Tagore. We wish you, dear poet, many happy years of creative work for the good of India and the mankind. The cultural workers in USSR wish you complete success in your educational work for the benefit of the newly emerging India.⁴³⁶

During these days, on the eve of the birth anniversary, there was also an exchange of letters between Tagore and Roerich.

In his letter of 20 April 1931, Roerich conveyed to his "dear brother in spirit" his appreciation of his educational and cultural work and informed him that the "Urusvati" Institute had at last been opened at Kulu (Punjab). Roerich also informed Tagore of his idea of a peace pact. He asked Tagore for "his authoritative opinion on this idea, calling the attention to the so urgently needed conception of protection of culture" :

Dear Brother in Spirit,

Long it is since we saw each other but with an ever burning admiration I followed up your thoughts which incessantly saturate the space. My best wishes accompanied you wherever you untiringly were sowing the beautiful garden of your seedlings of high cultural treasures. Verily now everything striving to Culture must be united, must feel to be on the very same boat crossing the same stormy ocean of human ignorance.

I feel in my innermost your benevolent thoughts about our cultural Institution, as you no doubt feel our spiritual sendings to your glorious Santiniketan. We certainly would rejoice to print in one of our Bulletins one of your enlightened addresses and I shall myself be very happy to give for the Quarterly of Santiniketan some of my thoughts about Culture. Herewith I am sending you several pamphlets of our Institutions.

You have probably heard about some of our difficulties with the sanction for land in Kulu Valley. I am happy to tell you that all difficulties are eliminated, about which we just received notification from the Govt. of India.

You have probably also heard of my Peace Pact idea with a special Banner for protection of all cultural treasures which recently was unanimously accepted by the Museum's Commission of the League of Nations and was accepted enthusiastically by the representatives of Culture in all countries. Certainly your authoritative opinion on this idea calling the attention to the so urgently needed conception of Culture, would be cherished by us.

With heartiest thought from Mme Roerich (her health worries us greatly), my son George and myself,

Yours in Spirit⁴³⁷

Nicholai Roerich

Tagore at once replied :

Dear friend,

I am delighted to receive your letter and to know that your cultural colony in Naggar, Kulu, is thriving as it should. I have keenly followed your most remarkable achievements in the realm of Arts and also your great humanitarian work for the welfare of the nations of which your Peace Pact idea with a special Banner for protection of cultural treasure is a singularly effective symbol. I am very glad indeed that this Pact has been accepted at the League of Nations and I feel sure that it will have far-reaching effects on the cultural harmony of nations.

I missed you in New York during my recent visit to that city. I shall be glad to visit your colony in Naggar

if I happen to travel toward northern India and shall then make personal contacts with the valuable work you have initiated there.

I appreciate very much your offer to make a gift of your works to our Institution. I shall be happy to present a set of my books to the library of Urusvati Himalayan Research Institution of Roerich Museum. If you kindly let me know where I should send those books I shall instruct my publishers to forward them accordingly.

We shall welcome your articles for the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* whenever you find time to send them to us. I hope this finds Mrs. Roerich in better health.

With my kindest regards to Mrs. Roerich and yourself, and my greetings to your son,

Sincerely yours,

Sd.—Rabindranath Tagore.⁴³⁶

For the anniversary Roerich wrote an article of the Poet, under the title "Vijaya Tagore". For him, Tagore was, above all, a great representative of universal human culture "permeative the most intimate corners of life." Roerich writes :

If the stronghold of Culture as always crown the heights, withstanding all the difficulties of a thorny and stormy path, how then must we be grateful to all those who have assumed the strain of leadership of culture.

And with what care must we safeguard the walls of these strongholds created by untiring daily labour. How we must bless those who kindle and sustain our enthusiasm.

When we think of invincible energy, blessed enthusiasm, pure culture, before me always rises the image of Rabindranath Tagore, so dear to me.

Great must be the potentiality of that spirit which prompts him untiringly to apply in life the foundation of true culture.

The songs of Tagore are inspirational calls to culture. They are prayers about great culture, his blessings to the seekers of the paths of ascent.

Synthesizing his immense activities—which ascent the very same mountain of bliss, and which penetrate into the narrowest alleys of life—could anyone abstain from

the feeling of inspiring joy ? So blissful, so beautiful is the essence of the hymns, the calls and works of Tagore.

Verily Santiniketan is growing like the tree of culture. We cannot judge how a powerful tree grows, why its branches are spreading in one form and another. By the condition of winds or other conditions of nature we would find an exploration.

What is important is for our spirit to realize that this tree is growing ;

Or in the language of a stronghold, it is important that the walls are being strengthened. And we know that these walls are constructed in the name of Culture and exist only because of culture.

Is it not sacredly joyous feeling which overwhelms us, as we look at the eternal snows of the Himalayas saturated with the miracle-working dust from far-off worlds, in realizing that now in our midst lives Rabindranath Tagore, that for seven decades he has untiringly glorified and praised the beautiful and ceaselessly accumulated the eternal stones of Culture, erecting the stronghold of joy in the human spirit.

This is so urgent ! This is so undeferrably needed ! Let us repeat untiringly about the necessity of the strongholds of Culture. Let us without end proclaim this true pride of nation and of the entire world.

The strongholds of Culture as magnets gather all which pertains to Culture and like anchors they hold the ships of spirit, which toss to the stormy ocean of the elements.

Tagore lives in the glory of Culture. Let Santiniketan stands as a guiding milestone for the growth of the human spirit, as a construction of the most needed, the most noble and most beautiful.

Vijaya Tagore ! Vijaya Santiniketan ! Himalayas, May, 1931.⁴³⁹

Besides the *Golden Book of Tagore*, the publishers gave him one more gift—*Letters from Russia* in book form, in Bengali, in a total impression of 3,000 copies,⁴⁴⁰ something quite unusual for that time. However, the book was fast sold out and

became a bibliographical rarity. Before this, as we know, these *Letters* had been serialized in "Prabasi" from November 1930 to April 1931.

The Bengali community reacted at once to these *Letters*; and their first impression is found summed up by the well-known scholar, Dhurjatiprasad Mukherjee in the first issue of the Bengali literary journal, "Parichaya", which had just started publishing from the year 1931.

This article in "Parichaya" noted, above all, Tagore's extraordinary courage and that change in his outlook which, we shall remember, the Poet himself noted when he said: 'Where is that Tagore who lived in the royal palace of sublime poetry?':

What a wonderful courage, what creative power this man has at the age of 70! . . . Where has gone the Philosophy of Leisure? Where have gone his . . . idealistic notions of property?

Where is gone his individualism? Where is gone his divine comparison of the society with the lamp—light above and darkness underneath? Where is gone his aristocratic isolation? Must one really give away everything when one goes to a place of pilgrimage?

One cannot recall in living memory any other instance of such passion for one's country, such eagerness for the education [of the masses], such compassion for plain tillers of land, such anxiety for the good of the country . . .

'The oppressed masses have today found their place in the world's arena,—this is the main thing', says Tagore.

That's why (Soviet) Russia is world's place of pilgrimage. That's why the Poet's *Letters from Russia* is a great work.⁴⁴¹

But it was not only appreciation that the *Letters from Russia* evoked. The *Letters* greatly upset those who could not grasp what the new Russia stood for.

Some American and German friends of Tagore, for instance, were disturbed; and, as we learn from one of his letters, they started accusing Tagore of Bolshevik leanings.

On 16 April 1931, Tagore wrote a letter to Indira Devi, in which he said:

The letter which was published in "Prabasi" as a conclusion to my *Letters from Russia* is of much significance.

My American and German friends feel sad over my passion for Bolshevism. I must at once explain my considerations to them.

The letter is written with this aim in view. I myself wanted to write it in English, but I don't feel like writing in this language except in dire need.⁴⁴²

Thus, we see, Tagore was well aware of the need of publishing *Letters from Russia* in English.

The main part of this conclusion, as we have been able to find, was even first published in English as early as in the very beginning of April 1931 (that is, before the original Bengali) in one of the Indian newspapers under the title "Tagore sees mass education saving Russia from *greed*," in a report originating from Bombay. The article also has such sub-titles as "The Effect of '*Greed*'"; "*Greed's* Penalty Endless" etc.

Thus we see again what relevance this word "*greed*" has for Tagore.

And when a major portion of this article was published in English translation in September 1931 in the "Modern Review", the colonial powers at once banned its further publication.⁴⁴³

But Tagore was not to be put off by such things. Three years later, Tagore reverted to it again—publishing it, this time in full under the title "On Russia", in June 1934 issue of the "Modern Review" in such a way as if it were one in a series of articles on Soviet Russia—right from January issue this journal published articles by different authors under such captions as "The problem of minorities in Soviet Russia", "Russia today : Children's Homes...", "Liquidation of illiteracy in Soviet Russia", "Art and literature in Russia today".

These articles were preceded by a patriotic poem of Tagore (published in the January 1934 issue) :

Freedom from fear is the freedom I claim
 for you, my motherland !
 Fear the phantom demon
 shaped by your own distorted dreams,
 Freedom from the burden of ages,
 bending your head, breaking your back

blinding your eyes to the
 beckoning call of future
 Freedom from shackles of slumber
 with which you fasten yourself
 to night's stillness
 Mistrusting the star that speaks
 Of truth's adventurous path.⁴⁴⁴

We shall also mention here that the full English translation of the *Letters* (except letter No. XIV) came out in America in the second half of the thirties. But this publication was probably proscribed in India because it has not been referred to even till this day.

Such a complete translation (with letter No. XIV), made by Sasadhar Sinha, was published in India by Visva Bharati only in 1959.

* * *

In 1932, Tagore visited Iran ; this, as we know, was his very last trip abroad. In his travel notes published later, Tagore again reminisces on Russia :

One cannot help wondering, that during such a short time the Soviet government could create quite a new life for the peoples living in the desert regions of Russian Turkestan. All these small peoples scattered in the desert have been granted the right to establish their own republics. Great and diverse efforts are made to disseminate education among these peoples. In the vast multinational Soviet state there is no longer enmity or massacre among national religious groups, which was a natural phenomenon in tsarist Russia.⁴⁴⁵

The correspondence between Tagore and Roerich continued. Roerich wrote to Tagore on 25 June 1932, but the fate of this letter is not known to this day.

At the end of the year, Roerich sends Tagore new year greetings, and again on 12 January 1933, sends him another letter, enclosing a clipping from an Argentinian newspaper with his article on Tagore.

Tagore replied the letter at once. He wrote on 29 January 1933 :

I am greatly encouraged by the awareness that *you are together with us* (italics mine—author). It is our endeavour to enshrine in this centre [Santiniketan] ideals which should be beyond the confines of national, egoistic aims. I know, you are engaged in noble work for the welfare of mankind. I am very happy to learn that, in every country, young souls are coming forward, ready to take on the themselves the courage of giving a call to our suffering age and uncompromisingly serve the cause of our common unity. . .

This reply, we feel, is of particular interest because it hints at the possibility of establishing mutual contact and collaborations between two centres of culture—Santiniketan and Urusvati—beyond the routine regular exchange of literature.

Very important in the context of determining the trend of educational work is the reference to youth, ready to fight for the ideals of humanism so dear to Tagore and Roerich.

It is not out of place to remember here that these were the days of rise of fascism in Germany.

Tagore, of course, not only followed the changes that took place in Russia with such success, and how the new life was being constructed there, he also, had a deep interest in Russian classical literature.

But what is almost unknown is that Tagore was quite familiar with the contemporary Soviet literature. This is seen so well from his message, sent through VOKS, to the First Congress of Writers of USSR, expressing his admiration of the works of Maksim Gorky, F. Gladkov, I. Romanov, Leonid Leonov. A reference to Babel's works is found in his letters to Amiya Chakravarty.

This message to the First Writers Congress was, apparently, intercepted by the colonial powers, and did not reach his Soviet friends. We don't find it in the authentic collection of documents as published by L. Gamayunov and V. Vdovin in their *Tagore : Friend of the Soviet Union* (in Russian).

We reproduce here in full this message of Tagore :

Dear Friend,

April 26, 1934.

I very much appreciate your kindness in sending me the books mentioned in your letter dated March 22, 1934

—EK/HL/2. The books, however, have not been received by me yet. It is possible they are detained by the over-vigilance of the Customs-examination authorities. However, let me thank you for having sent them.

Allow me to send through you my best wishes and humble respects to the forthcoming All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. It is kind of you to ask me for my opinion on the creation of your modern writers. I am reluctant to express my opinion regarding works which I have not had the good fortune of enjoying in the original. However, I cannot but offer my admiration, whatever its value, for the genius of such able writers as Gorky, Gladkov, Romanov, Leonov and others with whose works I may claim partial acquaintance through English translations.

My best wishes,

Sincerely yours,
Sd/- Rabindranath Tagore⁴⁴⁶

In October 1935 is again renewed the correspondence between Tagore and Roerich after the latter returned from one of his scientific expeditions, to Manchuria and inner Mongolia. He had to return quickly in September 1935, on getting the tragic news of the 'unprecedented plunder' of the property of the Roerich museum in New York by a group of American businessmen.⁴⁴⁷

On 23 October 1935 N. Roerich informed Tagore of his return from the expedition and how Tagore's name was being mentioned with great respect and admiration even in most diverse places of Asia :

"Urusvati"
NAGGAR, Kulu, Punjab, Br. India.
Oct. 23, 1935.

My dear honoured Friend,

After an almost two years' absence, I have just returned from an expedition in Central Asia and am sending you my heartiest greetings. In various parts of Asia I have heard your name repeated with greatest esteem and vene-

ration and I heartily rejoiced every time, for every appreciation of your genius resounds in the depth of my heart.

India is happy to have such a great Leader of Culture, as you. And in our times, when the world is filled with such hatred and destruction, such spiritual leaders are the only true strongholds of the world.

I shall always be happy to hear from you. Please accept Mme de Roerich's, my own and my sons heartiest greetings.

Yours very sincerely,

Sd/- N. de Roerich

To : Dr. R. Tagore.

We see how the words of Roerich that "the world is filled with...hatred and destruction" rescind Tagore's thoughts in spirit and even in language.

Replying to the letter on 1 November 1935, with the same warmth, Tagore says with characteristic humour that he envies Roerich for his courage to undertake such an arduous journey while he (Tagore) himself has to rest contented only by reading about such triumphs of human spirit. He invites the artist to visit Santiniketan, his life's work :

My dear Friend,

It has given me great pleasure to hear from you once again after a long silence and know you have safely returned to your asrama after an arduous expedition in Central Asia. I cannot help envying your thrills and experience in those remote and inaccessible parts of the globe where you go exploring from time to time. In my retirement of advancing age and preoccupations of a growing educational centre, I can satisfy my curiosity with merely reading about such triumphs of the indomitable spirit of man over nature and I hope your own fascinating narration will not be long withheld from us.

You have almost become a denizen of the arctic zone and I feel diffident about calling you to the plains. But it is our winter now and if you can possibly manage to bear its warmth here I shall be delighted if you will come and spend a few days with me at my asrama. The spirit of internationalism which permeates the place and its educational work, I am sure will greatly interest you. And be-

lieve me, it will indeed give me genuine pleasure to show you round my life's work, as Santiniketan has really been.

With kind regards to all of you,

In his reply of 15 November 1935 N. Roerich profusely thanked Tagore for the invitation and said he would come to Santiniketan at the earliest opportunity :

“Urusvati”

NAGGAR, Kulu, Punjab.

Nov. 15th 1935

My dear honoured Friend,

Many thanks for your kind invitation to visit you at Santiniketan. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see you in the surrounding of your beautiful Ashram. Such Centers of Wisdom as you have inaugurated are real monuments of the future glory of India.

Now I have just returned to my estate here and have much urgent work to accomplish, but when I shall be able to visit the plains again, I will be very happy to avail myself of your invitation.

For your Library I am sending some material on my Pact and further a rare token of Mongolian tribute—a monograph of myself just presented to me by the Government of Inner Mongolia before my recent departure from there.

Mme De Roerich and both my sons Georges and Svetoslav join in sending you best greetings.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore,

In Spirit with you,

Sd/- N. de Roerich

So Nikolai Roerich was not destined to be at Santiniketan ! and later he greatly regretted it. After Tagore's death he wrote in the “Pages from my diary” on 18 August 1941 :

For 18 years I was not destined to be at Santiniketan. Either the heat was too much, or Tagore was away from Santiniketan, or our Asiatic expeditions took us far, far away. Something always stood in the way ; and now there is no question of going to desolate smouldering ruins.⁴⁴⁸

However, we feel that Roerich did not visit Santiniketan not because “the heat was too much”. A seasoned traveller, he

of course, had nothing to fear from heat. He speaks of heat only because Tagore, in his invitation of 1 November 1935, speaks humorously of Nikolai Roerich being a denizen of the Arctic Zone. The situation in the country was tense, and Nikolai Roerich strove to avoid everything that could create difficulties both for Urusvati and Santiniketan, more so because he did not go out of Kulu practically after 1935. He had, we feel, a suspicion that both he and Tagore were under close surveillance of the colonial intelligence ; and, as we know, he was right.

The National Archives in Delhi, for instance, has, among other things, a note dated 28 January 1935, from the central intelligence, on the political activity of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and the question of invitation to him from the Delhi University (to deliver the convocation address).” We are reproducing this document here by the kind courtesy of the authorities of the National Archives of India (to whom we express our sincere indebtedness).

This note mentions Tagore as a “person hostile to Government”, “an anti-partition agitator”, and refers to a “source report from Calcutta” that Tagore is now more rabidly anti-Government than he ever was in the past”.

According to this note, the Calcutta Special (Intelligence) Branch and the Public Prosecutor even recommended the confiscation of a book (obviously, *Four Chapters*) of Tagore on the ground that the hero and heroine in this novel are terrorists. It seems, the Special Intelligence and the Public Prosecutor could not grasp the contents of the novel. As is known, in this book, Tagore censures the theory and practice of terrorism, which had swelled to great proportions in early 30s. The writer strives to show that the underground terrorist movement is hostile to humanism, and destroys in people the humanist feelings and kills love.

This ‘note’ is also of great interest as it so clearly refers to the British policy of partition which was the corner-stone of British rule in India.

We reproduce here this note in original :

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore who does not make use of his title of Knight, enjoys an international reputation as a poet,

philosopher, and authority on Indian culture. On the other hand, he came prominently to notice as an anti-partition agitator, and, since then, has been hostile to government. He has given Bengal many of its national songs.

2. A very recent source report from Calcutta alleges that he is now more rabidly anti-Government than he ever was in the past, and states that this is apparent in a novel which he has recently published. It is alleged that this novel has extolled the revolutionary cult in Bengal. The Calcutta Special Branch review of this novel is below, together with the opinion of the Public Prosecutor, Calcutta. He has recommended the forfeiture of the book under the Press Emergency Powers Act of 1931. The view he has taken, when considered with the reaction of an agent to the book, leaves one with no doubt that its effect in Bengal must be harmful. This is what one would expect with respect to any Bengali novel in which the hero and heroine are terrorists.

3. From the police point of view it is undesirable that a man with political views such as those held by Dr. Tagore, should be asked to give the Convocation address at an Indian university. I suggest that it would be unwise to tender an invitation to an author whose latest work may be forfeited. I note, however, that a similar invitation has already been extended to him by the Aligarh University.

4. I held up this file until I received the Calcutta S. B. letter below.

Sd/- Illigible⁴⁴⁹

28.1.1935.

This fact has also be noted by I. B. Roy in his pamphlet entitled "*Tagore, Santiniketan and Police Surveillance.*"

Here we cannot but also observe as mentioned by Dr. Leonid Mitrokhin (see "Soviet Land". Oct. 1984), that the intelligence dossier of the Indian Home Department has a lot of material on suspicions about Roerich and on how Roerich was not allowed to come to India for a long time even when he wanted to see his ailing wife. The British, according to this dossier, also stood in the way of Roerich establishing his Urusvati Institute at Kulu.

The correspondence is revived again from 9 July 1936 when Roerich sends Tagore a clipping from an article of the Latvian poet and scholar, the President of Roerich Society in Latvia, Rudzitis, written on the Poet's 75th birth anniversary, and writes that he read with great interest the latest issues of "Visva Bharati Quarterly".

In his reply of 14 July 1936 Tagore thanks Roerich for sending him the article.

The worsening of the world situation, Tagore's fiery speeches for peace and specially his ardent appeal to the Brussels Peace Congress as released to the press on 5 September 1936, inspired Nikolai Roerich to send him a special message.

In this message 15 Sept. 1936 Roerich thanked Tagore on behalf of the world League of Culture and Banner of Peace committees for his "enlightened authoritative defence of peace". He writes :

NAGGAR, Kulu, Punjab, Br. India.
Sept. 15, 1936

My dear revered Friend,

With deep enthusiasm we have read your clarion call for peace of Sept. 5th, published in the newspapers. May these ardent appeals reach the remotest parts of the world and may they create a moral impulse for mutual understanding and cooperation, for without these cultural foundations no true peace is possible. Permit me, on behalf of our World League of Culture and our Banner of Peace Committees to thank you most heartily for your enlightened authoritative defence of Peace. Verily, your name, like a beacon light, towers over many noble movements.

You will be interested to hear that the "Roerich Foundation *pro pace, arte, scientiae et labore*" in Bruges in October holds an International Day of Art for the same purpose of promulgating the peace movement. The last events in Spain have again turned the public eye towards our Pact of preservation of cultural treasures.

Mme de Roerich and both my sons send you their heartiest greetings to which I add my cordial fraternal wishes.

In heart and spirit with You,
N. Roerich

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore,
Santiniketan.

In his reply of 22 September 1936 Tagore made a brief but very comprehensive appraisal of the International situation and formulated his opinion on the tasks facing the true champions of peace.

My dear Friend, September 22, 1936

I am deeply touched by the sentiments you express in your letter which I received only yesterday, and I offer you my sincere thanks for the same.

The problem of Peace is today the most serious concern with humanity and our efforts seem so insignificant and futile before the onrush of a new barbarism, that is sweeping over the West with an accelerating momentum. The ugly manifestations of naked militarism on all sides forebode an evil future and I almost lose faith in civilization itself. And yet we cannot give up our efforts, for that would only hasten the end.

With warmest greetings to Madame de Roerich, yourself and your sons,

I remain,
Yours very sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore.

How relevant do these alarming, deep thoughts sound in our days! They were a firm support, a bridge for the world outlook of these great persons, of their outlook. Nikolai Roerich often referred to these lines of Tagore in his subsequent statements.

The year 1937 was the year of a comparatively more intensive exchange of letters between Roerich and Tagore. This was the year when the death centenary of the great poet, Aleksandr Pushkin, was being observed in the Soviet Union; and Nikolai Roerich was, as may be never before, mentally and emotionally, home, that is in Russia. His thoughts went back to the days when he had met Leo Tolstoy, he had suffered great grief on Maksim Gorky's death on 18 June 1936. And, on reading Tagore's account of Russia where the poet expressed his admiration on the progress that Russia had made in the field of

education,—which Roerich and Tagore both considered probably the most significant in their social work,—Roerich greatly wanted to share his views with him. He wrote :

NAGGAR,
Kulu, Punjab. Br. India.
11 Feb. 1937

My dear Honoured Friend,

When one wishes to express one's highest tribute to a friend who is close to the heart, one compares him with the greatest and most venerated. For me Tolstoy as a symbol of our beloved Motherland Russia is the greatest and therefore wishing to send to you my heartfelt homages, I see you both together as personification of the wisdom of two nations, which I love so much. For your Library I am sending also my essays on Gorky and Pushkin. The last mentioned, in connection with the centenary of his death this month, may be of interest to the students and magazine of Santiniketan.

I enclose some Peace Pact stamps with our motto : "Peace through Culture".

In the last issue of the "Modern Review" we read your benevolent words about Russia and the Russian people. May you ever be blessed on your glorious path.

Mme de Roerich and we all send you our heartiest wishes.

In Spirit with you
N. Roerich

Tagore sends a belated reply on 11 March 1937 (he was very busy these days in Calcutta).⁴⁵⁰ He says with his inherent modesty that Roerich associated his name with that of Tolstoy, of course, because of his good feeling towards him. The poet complains that he would have wished to have a similar refuge in the Himalayas as Roerich has to shelter himself from the attention of his compatriots. He wrote :

March 11, 1937.

My dear Friend,

You must forgive the great delay in replying to your letter, but I was in Calcutta going through a gruelling time

of innumerable engagements, I wish I had a Himalayan retreat like yours where I would be spared the pitiless attention and claims of fellow-beings.

It is indeed most kind of you to associate my name with that of Tolstoy, but I feel sure you were more guided by your affection for me than anything else. It's however so heartening to feel that one has earned the affection and goodwill of one's contemporaries.

The dreaded summer is on the near horizon and I am planning a short holiday to the hills. But so many things stand in the way, the chief being the weariness of old age.

With all good wishes to Madame Roerich and yourself,

Yours sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore.

The next letter to Roerich Tagore sent on 18 April 1937 in response to his greetings to Santiniketan on the occasion of the opening of a Chinese department in this University.

On 17 July 1937 Tagore conveys his thanks for the publications sent ; and, regretting his advancing age, says that his "recovery" is short lived. He was right.

Towards the end of July 1937, Tagore fell seriously ill. People in all parts of the world read reports of his illness with great anxiety and concern. Roerich also felt greatly concerned, and he prayed ardently for the recovery of his health. We read in his letter of 20 September 1937 to Tagore :

NAGGAR,
Kulu, Punjab, Br. India

My dear venerable Friend,

We were deeply grieved to read in delayed newspapers about your illness and the greater was all our joy reading today that you are better—as we had prayed and anticipated.

To you, the greatest living poet—the glorious Builder of Culture—are directed wishes and prayers from all parts of the world. When we send fervent calls : "By all means, guard your health"—this is not a mere message of goodwill, it is the deepest invocation from the core of the hearts to you, who have devoted your entire life to the Great Service !

May the Highest Forces bless and guard you—our beloved Gurudev !

In Heart and Spirit with you
N. Roerich

Tagore was greatly touched. In his brief reply of 27 September 1937 he shed off his usual reticence and called Roerich the "Dedicated one" :

My dear Friend,

Many thanks for your kind letter. Your affection and good wishes touch me very deeply and I am very glad to reciprocate them. I must also thank you for a photograph of yours along with a copy of the August issue of Educational Review containing an article dedicated to me, which I received some time back from you. Yours is a dedicated life and I hope you will be preserved long to continue your service to culture and humanity.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore

H. E. Prof. Nicholas Roerich,
Naggar, Kulu, Punjab.

In this very year of 1937, Roerich writes his essay "Tolstoy and Tagore", which continues to dwell upon the ideas expressed by him earlier in his article "Vijaya Tagore" that the world of Tagore and Tolstoy is not an utopia but a reality, a higher reality :

The ignorant would in vain hold that the world of Tagore and Tolstoy (and of N. Roerich, let us add—author) is an utopia. Hundred times a lie. What utopia is there in that one should live beautifully ? What utopia is there in that it is necessary to know and pervade everything around with education and enlightenment ? What utopia is there in knowing that one should not kill or destroy ? Well, these are not at all an utopia, but reality itself. If we do not envelop the dimness of this earthly life with the light of beauty, even if in individual extinguishing sparks, then this earthly life, in general, would be unthinkable. What deep human gratitude must be due

to those giants of thought who, with true self-sacrifice, and free of self-pity, keep reminding us of eternal sources of life. Without these laws of the beautiful, life would be turned into such ugliness that every breath of life would be stilled.⁴⁵¹

Hereafter, however, the correspondence between Nikolai Roerich and R. Tagore abruptly ends, save the exchange of important messages, when faced with menacing impending catastrophe—the beginning of the second world war, bringing ruin to tens of millions of people and destruction of innumerable cultural values. It is not clear why this correspondence stopped, but there is no doubt that this was partly because of the internal political situation in colonial India where the waves of national liberation movement were seething higher and higher, thus making it necessary for Roerich to exercise extra caution, more so because they did not have a definite citizen status.

Tagore too continued to remain under constant surveillance of the colonial special service which never could ignore the pungent observations he had been making against contemporary Western civilisation and against the British rule in India and in open support of the Soviet Russia, praising her great attainments. For instance, the letters exchanged by him with the Soviet Russia or Roerich were censored, often detained, and sometimes even “lost”.⁴⁵²

But there is no doubt that, even during this period, Tagore and Roerich remained close brothers in spirit, feeling with anguish the tragedy of the impending events, trying to see future, and looking into the face of future imminent victory over dark forces of fascism.

This is clearly seen from their letters of 1939, and from the surprisingly striking similarity of their thoughts, though remaining unknown to each other, during the terrible days of July 1941 when the destiny of mankind was on trial at the Soviet-German front during the Great Patriotic War. We shall return to this later.

Here are these letters of 1939 between Roerich and Tagore :

Roerich's letter of 29 September 1939 from Naggar :

My very dear Brother in Spirit,

I often remember your significant words in your letter

to me "and I almost lose faith in civilization itself, yet we cannot give up our efforts". Indeed, for Beauty, for Truth, for spiritual upliftment, for everything which is embraced within the domain of culture, we must continue to strive. If on the one hand we see a poisoning of space by shells and evil thoughts, then every word of the poet acts as a purifying panacea. "Beauty shall save the world" and this motto stands as a final goal. May the Great Forces of Light give you strength to continue your noble and beneficial work for yet many more years.

In Heart and Spirit
N. Roerich

Tagore's reply of 6 October 1939 from Mungpoo, Darjeeling :

Dear Friend,

Today I stand as much perplexed and distressed as you are with regard to the trend of events in the West ; we can but hope that world may emerge out cleaner through this bath of blood. But one must be too daring to risk a prophesy these days.

I have come upto this quiet resort for a restful holiday. Santiniketan is now too uncomfortably near civilisation to offer me any Santi ; tourists, sight-seers, autograph-hunters, pressmen and others make quiet living impossible for me. A kind friend has however offered me a warm sheiter here and I come whenever I can afford the luxury of a little holiday.

With warmest regards,

Rabindranath Tagore

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During these days Tagore also had an animated correspondence with his friends in USSR, mainly through VOKS. As per his wishes expressed to Petrov, the VOKS regularly sent him books, brochures, journals. Among these were, for instance, Sholokhov's *Quiet Don*, Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in Tiger's Skin*, in English translation, various publications on education, culture and other subjects. In its turn, the Visva Bharati was sending its publications to Moscow. Expressing gratitude for

the publications, Tagore noted that these would be very useful for the students and teachers of the University.

The colonial powers frequently detained the packets sent from Moscow ; and as Tagore, for example, mentioned in his letter of 26 April 1934 quoted above, sometimes these simply did not reach him.

In 1936, Tagore was again invited to the Soviet Union to take part in the 20th anniversary of the October Revolution next year.⁴⁵³

And in 1937, one more invitation was sent to Tagore by A. Arosev who had now succeeded Petrov as the Chairman of VOKS. Arosev wrote :

Moscow, May 25, 1937.

Dear Teacher :-

If you recollect, I had a talk with you in Stockholm in 1926, having been there as Counsellor at the Soviet Legation in Sweden. I think, I was the first one of the Soviet citizens, with whom you came into contact. Since that time ten years have passed. I personally, both as a writer and as President of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, shall be very happy to receive even a few words about your work, thoughts and your conceptions of the world of today.

Not only I, but all our intelligentsia and also working masses of our country shall be happy to see you here again as a guest of our country.

Please, accept my most sincere and hearty greetings as well as those of your numerous admirers and readers in the Soviet Union.

A Arosev

Tagore enthusiastically accepted the invitation this time and stressed that he was very eager to visit Russia again since his interest was "unabated" in that country and his earlier, first visit was "indeed a revelation". In reply Tagore wrote :

July 7, 1937

Dear friend,

I am thankful to you for your kind letter of 25th May which I received a few days ago but I regret that owing

to my absence from my headquarters I could not reply to it earlier. It is indeed kind of you to request me to send you a contribution for your Journal and I hope to be able to send you something within the next few days. You should not forget my days of activity are well nigh over and I write but seldom these days.

I am keeping in close touch with the affairs in your country—specially in matters cultural—through the publications of your Society and my interest in the USSR continues unabated. Nothing will give me greater pleasure if circumstances admit of my visiting New Russia once again—my visit in 1930 was indeed a revelation.

With all good wishes,

M. A. Arosev.

Yours sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore⁴⁵⁴

Arosev had known Tagore for a long time—we may remember, he had met him in Stockholm as early as in 1926. In 1930 he could not meet Tagore in Moscow as he was then the plenipotentiary representative of USSR in Prague, but he wrote to him from there :

Prague,
30 September 1930

Dear Sir.

I greet the great writer of our time. I regret I could not greet you personally in Moscow. I should have been still more gratified to do so, since I was the first of the Soviet citizens to converse with you, Mr. Rabindranath Tagore, in Stockholm on 5 September 1926, and at that time you spoke for the first time your intention to visit our capital. At that time I informed our public through medium of our press of my meeting with you, and since then Moscow and all the leading and thinking people of the Soviet Union have looked forward expectantly to your visit.

Please, receive my best and sincere greetings,

Yours respectfully,
Sd/- A. J. Arosev

There was also an exchange of letters between Tagore and the Central House of Art Education of Children of R.S.F.S.R.

We learn from this letter that Tagore's *Letters from Russia* were read in Moscow in English translation in 1936. The letter partly reads :

4 June 1936

Most Esteemed Mr. Rabindranath Tagore,

We have just read excerpts from your diary of 1930 [Letters from Russia] published in the American journal "Common Sense" and could not but feel happy and proud, reading your wonderful words on Soviet Union.

We shall be very happy, if our publications give you joy.

V. Zel'dovich, Director

Tagore replies on 22 July 1936 :

July 22nd, 1936

Dear friend,

I am much touched by your kindness in sending me through Comrade Belyanetz a booklet containing pictures of the work that is being done in the Central House of Art Education of Children. Though I am thousands of miles away from you, I am keeping myself in touch with the progress of your activities through the journals and books that come out from time to time on Soviet Russia. May the great work you have undertaken in the cause of education succeed completely and bring joy and enlightenment to the children who have the rare good fortune to be entrusted to your care.

Yours sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore⁴⁵⁵

Tagore was also at the time corresponding with the editorial board of the journal "International'naya Literatura" [International Literature] which he received regularly along with some other publications and greatly liked. His letter of 29 August 1938, for instance, reads :

I have read with great interest these publications relating to matters of culture, and thank you for sending them regularly.

The new books and journals on art, literature and education published in your country would be useful to our students and teachers studying the development of modern thought.⁴⁵⁶

Tagore, of course, also continued to correspond with Academician F. I. Shcherbatskoi. We also found Tagore's reply to a letter from one of Shcherbatskoi's pupils, I. D. Serebryakov, now a distinguished scholar and Indologist, well known in India for his contributions to study of ancient and modern Indian literature :

Dear Serebryakov,

March 11, 1938

I have read your letter with great interest. I hope someday you will know enough Bengali to read my books in the original Bengali.

With my blessings,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Rabindranath Tagore

It is not our purpose to reproduce all correspondence of Tagore with Soviet Russia. More of it is available in the collection of documents brought out by V. A. Vdovin and L. S. Gamayunov.

Tagore's correspondence with his Soviet friends, as also with Nikolai Roerich, was cut short, because of the beginning of the second World War, in the end of 1939.

But mentally Tagore never parted with his Soviet friends. In the last year of his life he rather made some very important statements on Soviet Russia, again specially comparing the attainments of the Soviet Russia with the impoverished position of India. We shall come to this later.

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Tagore not only corresponded with his Soviet friends. Some of his statements against fascism, and militarism, and in defence of peace, were published in the Soviet press. For instance, on 22 March 1937, the newspaper "Izvestia" published his inflamed message in defence of the republic of Spain : "Save Spain, save civilisation from the onslaught of barbarity ! Tagore's appeal to the conscience of Mankind."

The journal "Internatsional'naya Literatura" [International Literature], in 1938, 1939, published his comments, bitterly condemning the aggression of the Japanese militarists against China. "In our time," Tagore wrote, "when one nation encroaches on the territory of another, the evil created by it finds expression not only in its imperialist designs but also in the mass killing of human beings ; these killings are more horrible than plague."⁴⁵⁷

Such statements exposing the wild cruelty and barbarity of fascism, and militarism, of course, Tagore published not only in the Soviet press. These were carried by the Indian press too, and in some cases, by the "Manchester Guardian."

We find Tagore's thoughts and feelings not only in his articles but also in his literary work, specially in his poetry, this time creating in Bengali literature the genre of so-called political lyric.

We may now stress that the last years of Tagore's life, 1936 to 1941, have a special place in his literary work. He too comes closer to the left wing of Indian litterateurs, and welcomes the creation of the Association of Progressive Writers in 1936. He collaborates with the well-known leftist Bengali literary-artistic and socio-political journal "Parichaya".

The impudent actions of the aggressors leading to the second world war, particularly Italy's attack on Abyssinia, Japan's on China, the deals struck by Western politicians at Munich placing Czechoslovakia at the mercy of Hitler, evoked, as we saw, the Poet's deep indignation.

An ardent and a convinced fighter for peace, Tagore signed the appeal to the World Conference for Defence of Peace (1936), which partly read :

It would be a crime to be silent when the mad reactionaries and militarists are playing on the civilisation and have started the destruction of world culture. Our duty before the society is to oppose this in every way ; we must resist war.⁴⁵⁸

In Tagore's literary work the anti-imperialist, anti-fascist motifs find an ever more lucid, complete expression. He again

In his works he again writes of his deep respect for plain people, for workers who created all values on earth.

With clutches sharper than the claws of
your own wild wolves :
Slavers came,
With an arrogance more benighted than
your own dark jungles.
Civilization's barbarous greed
Flaunted its naked inhumanity.

Such was Poet's immediate reaction to the plundering attack of fascist Italy on Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in early 1935.

The Poet, as before, is deeply agitated by the events transpiring in the wide world, by the impending catastrophe of another world war.

The terrible threat of militarism and fascism made the Poet apparently doubt the effectiveness of principle of non-violence.

In one of his poems in *Prantik* [On the Brink, 1938] the Poet turns to *visva-vidhata* with prayer to give him strength to combat with the barbarians.

This is already some sort of a call for a violent fight against the aggressor :

Give me strength, O mighty judge,
Give me the voice of the storm
That I may condemn
This cannibal, whose wolfish hunger
Pities neither women, nor even
children.⁴⁶⁰

And in his next poem in this Collection Tagore already directly calls for a struggle against the aggressors :

The Snakes are exhaling their poison around,
Breathing over words of peace.
Therefore, before I part,
I call upon you, the people everywhere :
Be ready to fight the forces
of barbarism.⁴⁶¹

The Poet is particularly disturbed by the bloody aggression of Japan against China. Krishna Kripalani writes that Tagore valued Japan and he felt great pain and feeling of humiliation on that the nation which he had some time greeted as the rising light in Asia had become the scourge of the East.⁴⁶²

In another famous poem "The Worshippers of the Buddha" (1938), which, in fact, is a severe condemnation of the Japanese aggressors, the Poet comes down heavily on religious fanaticism too.

There beat the drums of war
Before preparing for the feast of the god of death
[Young human flesh],
They are going to the temple of the
merciful Buddha
to seek his blessings.⁴⁶³

No less is he agitated on the events in Europe, particularly the Munich deals between the Hitlerite Germany and Western

powers. He writes to Professor Lesny, the Czechoslovak scholar who had worked for many years at Santiniketan :

I don't have enough words to give a befitting reply to the aggression of the maniacs... I feel myself so humiliated ... so helpless.⁴⁶⁴

But Tagore found the befitting words in his wonderful poem "The Atonement" (1938). In the hell called civilisation, Tagore writes, a fight is going on between the hungry and the satiated, vices are being spread amongst the people, the strong are shamelessly plundering the weak. The Poet ardently wishes that the weakness of those who are being oppressed and humiliated should be burnt in fire.⁴⁶⁵

Tagore, it seems, can foresee that another world war is inevitable and ardently believes in the dawn of a new life thereafter. He writes :

After the terrible sacrifice,
And after the atonement,
Will the light of the new life
Blaze in the new land.⁴⁶⁶

These lines of Tagore seem to continue the thoughts expressed earlier in a number of poems, specially in the "Flight of Swans".

Under Tagore's presidentship an "Indian Committee of the League Against Fascism and War" was set up in Calcutta in 1937.

We see, Tagore reacts to the burning issues of the times. He reflects yet deeper and more broadly on his life's experience, on the events of the modern history, on philosophical conceptions, specially those of life and death. And frequently, the lyrical intimacy starts giving way to the philosophical, intellectual mood. He still finds life alluring and death unattainable. His poems intermingle opposite moods—rebellion and surrender, energy and fatigue, joy and sorrow.

Subjecting his own creative path to merciless criticism, the Poet again (as, for example, we saw in his letters) says that his poetry had blossomed "in the inner garden though all his life he tried to enlarge his audience. Sometimes it even appears to him that his "gifts" are no more needed by the people :

The poems written in the very last years of his life strike by the density of their content and some peculiar novelty in the perception of the world. One of the very first poems in the collection "Bed-ridden" (1940) sounds like a symphony to the grandeur of human spirit triumphing over illness and suffering.

The gigantic wheels of pain
 Turn round and round
 In this great universe . . .
 So frail the human body
 So vast its capacity to suffer . . .
 So unending the source of strength,
 So great the indifference to death
 And the patience so unlimited.⁴⁶⁸

The Poet's heart is full of joy on recovery from illness :

Open the windows wide,
 Let the blue sky be seen.
 The first ray of the sun,
 The greetings of the whisper of the leaves,
 Tell me, I am alive.⁴⁶⁹

The Poet again discovers for himself the sublime truth that nothing is higher than life itself :

I bless all that is,
 Enchanting the dust of this earth,—
 This the greatest truth
 Revealed to my heart.⁴⁷⁰

But the Poet knows that his days are numbered, and he continues to ponder over great riddles of life and death. The Upanishadic image of the Great Unknown starts appearing more frequently in his poems :

I shall go away where there is no entity,
 Where all worldly ties come to an end,
 Where 'yes' and 'no' merge into one,
 Where the endless day knows nor light nor dark
 Where the stream of my 'I' quietly falls
 Into the great river of Pure Consciousness.⁴⁷¹

On 21 January 1941 takes shape one of Tagore's best poems "The World Symphony", his poetic testament. All his life, the Poet says, he heard the great symphony of life. And much he was able to attain, but much escaped him. Particularly difficult it was to understand man's soul, the most complex phenomenon in this world. The Poet recalls with grief that he had to live in a high tower and observe life from its narrow slot ; and this kept him afar from the way to the heart of the common man.

In this poem Tagore entrusts the poet of the future to become the flesh and blood of the people at large and sing the glory of those who toil :

Come, O poet of unknown, mute souls !
Let them bask in glory with thy fame,
And I shall bow to thee.⁴⁷²

In another well-known poem "The People Toil" (written on 13 February 1941) the Poet glorifies those "who sow and reap, who carry the plough or the fishing nets" :

In sorrow, in joy, by day, by night,
They read the great *mantra* of life,—
On the ruins of empires unnumbered
Do the people toil.⁴⁷³

Now to Tagore's 80th birthday.

Just as on his 70th birthday (when he had just returned from the USSR), his own gift to his friends at home and abroad was his *Letters from Russia*, now on the eve of his 80th birthday, he prepares a similar gift, as if dilating the ideas he expressed in the *Letters*—this time, a pamphlet of publicist nature, "The Crisis of Civilisation", his political testament. In this, he took stock of the efforts of the British colonial rule in India and prophesied the imminent liberation of his native land. In this context, he reminisces a great deal on new Russia, the country of the new civilisation freed from *greed*.

In "The Crisis of Civilisation" he states :

The wheels of fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian Empire. But *what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery?* [Italics mine—author]. When the stream of their two centuries' administration runs dry at last, what waste of mud and filth they will leave behind them ?

Inevitably turning his thoughts to the Soviet Union, he draws the following comparison :

The unsparing energy with which Russia has tried to fight disease and illiteracy and has succeeded in steadily liquidating ignorance, and poverty, wiping off the humiliation from the face of a vast continent ! Her civilisation is

free from all invidious distinction between one class and another, between one sect and another.⁴⁷⁴

Particular attention Tagore pays to the fact that because of the proper policies followed by the Soviet government, the peoples of various nationalities and religions in that country live as members of a fraternity, in peace and harmony, enjoying equal rights, while in India, the foreign rule has prevented the development of the country and is destroying the native people physically and morally. He wrote :

The British have trampled on the manhood of the subject races under their rule, keeping them in a moribund state. It is otherwise in Soviet Russia which has political attachments with many Muslim tribes in its territory ; the government have striven hard and unceasingly for the welfare of those peoples, trying to harmonise the interests of all.⁴⁷⁵

Such very lucid, clear parallels he draws in his other statements, for instance, in his radio talk on his 80th birthday (on 8 May 1941) :

At a time when the imperialist powers are, in the name of their animal *greed*, sacrificing the safety of the peoples under their subjugation, I have seen in the Soviet Union real efforts for combining the interests of various nationalities living on its territory. What colossal means are here spent on the education of the peoples ! When I saw about 200 nationalities which only a few years back were at quite different levels of development and have now marched ahead in peaceful collaboration, and when I look at my own homeland . . . I cannot but contrast the two systems of government—the one based on collaboration, the other on exploitation—the systems which made such directly opposed conditions possible.⁴⁷⁶

In the same way, replying to Miss Rathborn, he refers to the experience of Soviet Russia :

In 1931, even after a couple of centuries of British administration, only about one per cent of the population was found to be literate in English while in the USSR in 1932 after only 15 years of Soviet administration, 98 per cent of the children were educated.⁴⁷⁷

Here, we would like also to quote a poem with which Tagore concluded his "Crisis of Civilisation" but which actually is some sort of his perception of the future. He greets and affirms the new life on the earth after the forces of the evil are conquered though he seemingly knows that he may not be alive to see all this. But he knows and believes that the forces of new light will triumph :

I hear a new mankind coming,
Amidst dust of earth rising from all sides.
The conch-shells piping in the sky,
The drums beating on the earth,
Herald the coming of the new mankind.
The night of the new moon ends,
The dawn sounds the arrival of the new life,
With echoes rising to the sky :
'Victory, victory to the mankind being born anew !'⁴⁷⁸

In USSR, a number of articles were published in connection with Tagore's 80th birthday. One of these was by V. Nagel', a literary critic, who, having touched on Tagore's visit to the USSR and his warm, friendly feelings towards that country, stressed that his writings on Russia created confusion among the British colonial powers. He wrote, "The British Minister for India Affairs, Mr. Butler, stated that Tagore's book was meant to abuse British power in India."⁴⁷⁹

The most thorough and detailed article published on this occasion was that by N. M. Gol'dberg (1891-1961), a prominent Soviet historian and Indologist.

The writings of N. M. Gol'dberg and of another distinguished scholar, I. M. Reisner (1898-1958), mark a new stage in the study of Tagore's creative work in USSR based on a strict literary and critical analysis of his creative work and of his association with the national liberation movement.

In the first volume (1940) of his *New History of Colonial and Dependent Countries* [in Russian], Professor I. M. Reisner called Tagore "the greatest figure of modern Indian literature . . . highly gifted in lyrical poetry, prose and dramaturgy." Reisner further wrote :

Tagore is a poet who has accepted life in all its fullness, has a profound feeling for nature and a delicate sense of beauty of all that is truly human.⁴⁸⁰

This assessment, in some measure, corresponds too what A. V. Lunacharsky wrote far back in 1923.

Following Professor Reisner's ideas, N. M. Gol'dberg, in the aforementioned article, notes that the "great Bengali is the most brilliant symbol of the development of national culture of India". Interesting are author's observations on differences in perception of writer's work in Europe and in India :

While some circles in Europe perceive Tagore's poems as an introduction to the world of mysticism filled with all-permeating spirit, in India, these poems inspire the readers, inculcating in them a love for their country and for labour and a confidence in the impending freedom of the country."⁴⁸¹

A complete survey of the writings of N. M. Gol'dberg and I. M. Reisner and also of scholars of the post-Tagore period does not fall within the scope of this book. Still, we cannot but say a few words on this.

The aforestated method of study of the work of the great Indian writer received its full development in the post-War times when India became free and cultural relations between our countries developed vastly. It was then that numerous translations of Tagore's works made from original Bengali started coming out in large numbers—as individual books, and later as collected Works, first in a 8-volume and in then a 12-volume edition based on Bengali originals. Many writings of Tagore contained in these are not available even in English. The Introductory articles to these editions were written by the author of the present work.⁴⁸²

No other country outside India, it may be mentioned, has such a voluminous edition of Tagore's Collected Works.⁴⁸³

Numerous articles and collections of articles on Tagore appear from these early years of developing Indian-Soviet cooperation.⁴⁸⁴ The first monograph on Tagore by the author of the present work came out in 1961.⁴⁸⁵ Tagore's birth centenary in 1961 was celebrated throughout our country on a very big scale. A special centenary volume was published (in Russian).

We mentioned in the very beginning of this book that Tagore continued to be translated and published ever with undiminished interest. In this connection, we would like specially to mention here the work, on Tagore, of such Soviet scholars of Bengali studies as E. K. Smirnova-Brosalina (Leningrad) and V. Ya. Ivbulis (Riga), and the gifted translations made into Ukrainian from original Bengali by V. G. Batyuk.⁴⁸⁶

However, the study of Tagore in the Soviet Union, on such a big scale, in the post-Tagore era, is a subject of an independent monograph. Some idea of this good work can be formed from the books *Tirthadarsaner panchas-batsar* [Fifty Years of (Tagore's) Pilgrimage (to USSR)] issued in Bengali by the Information Department of the USSR Consulate General in Calcutta, and the just published *Traditions of Great Friendship* (A Collection of Articles) by Professor E. P. Chelyshev and Dr. A. D. Litman.

These were already the last months. The birthday celebrations had ended. The Poet's health was becoming more and more worse. He was already too weak to hold his pen in his hands. But in a faint voice he dictated his last poems.

On 13 May 1941, one of his last poems was written down :

The truth is severe,
But severe is what I ever love,
For, it never does cheat.
This life is a *tapasya*—
One of suffering right unto the last.
One must pay the terrible price of truth
And clear off all debts with death.⁴⁸⁷

On 22 June 1941, Hitlerite Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Bed-ridden, the Poet at once agreed to be a patron of the just formed "Friends of the Soviet Union". As Professor Hiren Mukherjee recalls :

The initiative for starting the FSU came from Bengal almost immediately after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. An organising committee was set up,

with Dr. Bhupen [dranath] Dutta (brother of Swami Vivekananda) as Chairman and Hiren Mukherjee and S. K. Acharya as joint secretaries.

Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest among the friends of the Soviet Union, had agreed to act as patron of the organisation.⁴⁸⁸

Of what Tagore felt during these days when the very fate of mankind stood on trial we have a first-hand evidence in the authentic memoir of Rani Mahalanobis (who, with her husband, was near the Poet in those days) published under the caption *Baishe Sravan* (the day of Tagore's death) :

The newspapers came. I brought these straight to him. I saw, his only interest was in the news of war, that is, whether the Germans were advancing or the Russians had held them somewhere. The day he saw that the German advance had been checked, he would read the paper from the first bit to the last. And when the headlines read that the German armies had moved forward for so many miles, he read only the captions and threw off the paper on the ground.

'Take them away', he would say. That day, he would be quiet for a long time, lost in his own sad thoughts. For him, Hitler's victory would have been the crash of all those ideals of mind, life and world which he so valued and respected. For a person like him it would have been a terrible catastrophe worse than death itself.⁴⁸⁹

Professor Mahalanobis adds : "He [Tagore] had a profound confidence in Russia. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union during the last days of his illness, he waited every day for the news from Russia. Again and again he used to say : "My greatest happiness will be in Russia's victory."⁴⁹⁰

On 25 July 1941, Tagore was brought to Calcutta for operation. Here he wrote his very last poems. On 27 July he wrote :

The Sun of the first day asked :
Who are you ? . . . No reply.
Years went by
The sun of the last day asked :
. . . Who are you ? No reply.⁴⁹¹

As though, he had perceived the coming death itself.

It was now the end of July 1941. Bloody battles were going on at the Soviet-German front. Hitler's plans for a quick war, suffered repulse. On 29 July 1941 the Indian newspaper "Hindustan Standard" came out with large headlines "Soviet Troops' Major Victory. Nazi Infantry Division Destroyed. 104 Nazi Aircraft Downed".

The next day, on 30 July, Professor Mahalanobis and his wife, Rani, came very early. This was the day of Poet's operation after which Tagore died on 7 August 1941 retaining little consciousness.

The Poet's thoughts were concentrated not on the operation but on the events at the Russian-German front.

As Rani Mahalanobis recollects :

Hardly had we entered the room when Tagore asked impatiently : "Prasanta, what do the papers write today about the war ?" "Reading today's papers, it appears, at last the good news. Russians apparently have been able to hold the Germans. The Germans already cannot move so fast." Hearing this, the Poet's face lit up with satisfaction. He exclaimed : "They can, they can, only they can ! Hitler is so impudent. . . The Enemies (Dushmans !)" And added : "The Russians are showing unprecedented heroism. In fighting they are doing the impossible." The Poet's face continued to shine with some inner light. . .⁴⁹²

It was with these thoughts of the coming victory over the brown plague that the great Poet departed from life. . .

* * *

Incidentally, on this very day, Nikolai Roerich wrote in his "Pages from My diary" (30 July 1941) :

The evil forces wished all achievements of our homeland destroyed and our people wearing the fascist fetters. But the fascists and their satellites would have a befitting retribution. And the Russians would firmly stand at the place of glory. This feat would fix one of the most wonderful milestones in the history of culture.⁴⁹³

Tagore was no more. In the lines written by Roerich on 18 August 1941 in his "Pages from My Diary", there sounds, we feel, a peculiar anguish, some particular indignation :

Yesterday ended the death rites of Tagore. It is strange that the Poet's voice will be heard no more. Rabindranath Tagore is gone. One more page of culture is completed. Still something more sincere could be expressed for the Poet, still something more could be said. But already no more of it. Nothing more to say but only to think that his memory will stay refulgent⁴⁹⁴ ...

Condolence messages came from all corners of the world. These also came, of course, from the Soviet Union. The official condolence message was sent by I. Maisky, the plenipotentiary representative of USSR in Great Britain...

"I saw in this sanctified land [Soviet Russia] the visage of a new age," wrote Tagore in his letter to Amiya Chakravarty on 28 August 1936.

"To the Russian reader Rabindranath Tagore revealed the hitherto little known world of the Indian soul," wrote the eminent Soviet poet, Nikolai Tikhonov, in his article published in October 1944 in the "Modern Review".

With these sublime words of Tagore himself and of Nikolai Tikhonov we would like to end this book.

Tagore wrote :

In Soviet Russia I have seen endeavours to replace the very base of civilisation. It seemed to me, we could yet be saved, if they could change this cannibalist tendency of the state power. Else, freedom will not be won by the weak, by just a show of fiery eyes, or through weakness taking recourse to mercy. *I was exhilarated and inspired to see the visage of a new age, emerging out of self-sacrifice, in this sanctified land, whatever the shortcomings.* Never in the history of mankind have I seen such solid ground for joy and hope. *I know, Russia has laid the foundation of this age through a great revolution.* This is a revolution against the most merciless and powerful

foe of man within him. This revolution is the outcome of our atonement for our age-old sins.⁴⁹⁵

Nikolai Tikhonov wrote :

There are names that call up great thoughts and great countries. Rabindranath Tagore's is one of them. Behind it we have the vision of a vast country stretching from the Himalayan peaks to the Indian Ocean, the country of boundless fields, endless roads and ancient cities.

Amid Russian snows, through the thunder of upheavals in which that new world which we call our country was born, above the universal voices that spurred us in our searches for perfection we heard in an enchanted world the songs and talks in the penetrating voice of that wise singer of life, Rabindranath Tagore. As poet, novelist and dramatist, he appealed to the Russian reader to whom he revealed the hitherto little-known world of the mysterious Indian soul. Of the grandeur of this country with its age-old culture, its gifted peoples, we have known, and most of all of her soul, mighty and tender, we learned from books written by her finest son, her singer. The melodious blossoming of his lines in *Gitanjali* is a splendid introduction to that country. Later we met his *Gardener*, his *Morning Songs* and his lyrical plays...

... Tagore is very close to us for another reason : not confining his search for perfection to his native soil, he studied all that was human and constantly reflected and debated upon it. Peaceful life, creative work and the necessity for complete understanding among nations of the world drew his attention to that remarkable family of peoples, the Soviet Union. We can but regret that now, when the mortal duel with fascism's dark forces is approaching its end, we are unable to welcome this wise poet in our victorious camp.

Tagore came from that race of giants of thought whose people belong to all progressive mankind. He was for India what Leo Tolstoy was for Russia. We have millions of friends in India, but the first of them to give voice to the profound world of his country, a word addressed to the whole world, was Rabindranath Tagore, poet, dramatist, novelist and philosopher.

The efforts made by Russia to acquaint herself with India and her hoary culture are not widely known. During the early part of the nineteenth century, a translation of the *Rig Veda* was published in Bombay with assistance from Russia. Scholars like Minaev, Vasil'ev, Shcherbat-skoi have devoted their lives to the study of Indian culture and civilisation. Towards the close of the past century a Bengali youth, Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya, held the Chair of Bengali Language at the University of St. Petersburg.⁴⁹⁶

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) Amiya Chakravarty writes : "The special train [was] arranged for the memorable visit by Lunacharsky—this was a state invitation to a world famous poet." [See his "Memory Notes on Tagore's Visit to Moscow in 1930, in "Maitree", quarterly quadrilingual journal . . . Calcutta, Druzhba, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1982, p. 51 (Hereafter "Maitrec")].

- (2) Amiya Chakravarty (b. 1901) : Poet and a friend of Tagore.

He was Tagore's personal secretary for many years. Lived for a long time in USA, and now settled in Santiniketan. He has been to USSR a number of times.

- (3) Saumyendranath Tagore (1901-1974) : Writer, revolutionary, a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore.

He was close to "Kallol" group, including Nazrul Islam. In 1927 he went abroad, in 1928 to USSR, where he took part in the work of the Communist International. Afterwards, he was arrested by the British and German police for communist activity, and so spent eight years in jail.

Has written on Rabindranath. Besides English and Bengali, he wrote also in Russian, French and German. In Russian were published his story "Kuli chainykh plantatsii" [The Coolies of Tea Plantation, M., 1932] and the pamphlet "Terror v Indii" [Terror in India, M., 1928].

- (4) Dr. Harry Timbers : Tagore's American friend ; physician ; member of the American Friends Service Organisation (which deputed him to work at Santiniketan and which later organised Tagore's last visit to USA).

He studied and valued the health system of USSR ; helped at the time of typhoid epidemic in USSR and died there (as per Amiya Chakravarty).

- (5) Dr. William Ariam, one of Tagore's secretaries. He later did social work at Sevagram, under Gandhi. Died in India.

The author of the present book had met him at Madras in 1956. Dr. Ariam recalled his pleasant visit to USSR.

- (6) About Margarete Einstein we know little. According to Amiya Chakravarty, she presently lives in USA and he has often been meeting her. (See Jhara Basu : "Rabindranath Soviet desh bhraman o Kavi Amiya Chakravarty" [Rabindranath's Visit to Soviet Russia and the Poet Amiya Chakravarty],—"Lokhak samabesh" (in Bengali), vol. 2, no. 12, April 1982, pp. 1-3).

- (7) Now Belorussky [White-Russian] station.

- (8) "Maitree", pp. 51-2.

- (9) The two voluminous books published under the title *Russia's March towards India* (Lnd., 1894), for example, testify to this fear.

See also Kaye : *Unpublished documents on Communism in India*. Some data in this book seem to purport that Tagore had been invited to the Soviet Russia even as early as in 1920. This is mentioned by Maitreyee Devi in her book *The Great Wanderer*. But we have no authentic data on this.

From Kaye's documents we also see that Tagore was suspected by the British secret service of not only sympathising with but even helping the revolutionaries, including communists.

- (10) R. Tagore : *My Reminiscences*, Lnd., 1942. pp. 69-70.
 (11) Keshav Chakravarty : *Bharate rus katha ; Bangalir rus charcha* [...Study of Russia by Bengalis], Calcutta, Manisha, 1976, p. 226.

- (12) R. Tagore : *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, Lnd., 1958, p. 219.
- (13) One of the best Bengali periodicals of the time, "Bharati" started publishing from the year 1878, and continued up to 1924. From vols. 10-16, it came out under the title "Bharati Balaka". This journal published some of the earliest translations, into Bengali, of Russian classics. The first verse translations of Pushkin, Lermontov, Fet, Nekrasov, made into Bengali by Tagore's friend, Satyendranath Datta, were published in this journal in the last decade of its existence.
- (14) Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya was born in a village near Dacca, in the family of a known advocate and leader of a conservative Hindu society there. Right from his early years Nishikanta was against the evils of child marriage and wrote for the Bengali journal "Maha-pap bal-bibaha" [Child Marriage : A Great Sin].
- For further studies, Nishikanta went over to Calcutta and joined the Presidency College. (See Keshav Chakraborty : *op. cit.*). See also notes 16, 18 and 19.
- (15) "Bharati", Chaitra, BS 1288.
- (16) In Calcutta, Nishikanta came close to Brahmo Samaj circles, specially Debendranath Tagore. Abroad, first at Edinburgh, Nishikanta studied classical languages and also ancient medicine and then at Leipzig, philosophy and linguistics. His articles on Buddhist studies and Indian literature showed the makings of a research scholar in him.

While in Leipzig, he was able to impress greatly the Education Secretary of Russia, who invited him to come to teach Indian languages at St. Petersburg. Nishikanta arrived in St. Petersburg in 1878. His stay in Russia was not long though it was quite fruitful.

It should be noted that he was quite at home in Russia, and liked mixing with people. He also mastered Russian language there. He saw points of similarity between the Indians and the Russians—they, he says, are sincere, frank, follow a joint family system... He even translated into Russian some Indian patriotic songs.

But, unfortunately, he had to leave his St. Petersburg assignment because of differences with the high-ups. It seems, Nishikanta had been under the close watch of secret Czarist police. (It was a time when the "Narodnaya Volya" had made some attempts on the life of the Czar, Alexander II, and he, as we know, was even killed in March 1881).

We feel, Nishikanta might have inadvertent'y made some remarks to his students, which were conveyed and attracted the attention of Czarist police. According to a report in India the Russian government had started suspecting him even of being a British spy.

Having been made to leave Russia, Nishikanta went away to Germany and Switzerland. In Zurich he took his doctorate.

The subject of his research was "The Yatras or the Popular Drama of Bengal." His other books published from Zurich, in German, were *Indische Essay* and *Buddhism and Christianity*. The paper "The Bengalee" wrote on 17th March 1881 : "He has shown a degree of scholarship which has excited even the admiration of German savants."

Debendranath Tagore wrote to Nishikanta's brother that he (Nishikanta) had been staying in Europe for nine years and that, if he returned, a lot of good would be done by him. He sent a cheque for Rs. 1,000/- to arrange Nishikanta's return. (See Keshav Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, p. 123).

(17) Keshav Chakravorty : *op. cit.*, p. 125.

(18) Nishikanta returned to Calcutta on 22 February 1883 to a triumphal ovation. Those to welcome him with all enthusiasm included Surendranath Banerjea, Keshav Chandra Sen, Isvara Chandra Vidyasagar and representatives of the Tagore family. A reception was arranged for him, one poet recited even an ode composed in his honour. He found even a more enthusiastic welcome at Dacca.

Isvara Chandra Vidyasagar offered a teaching assign-

ment of Rs. 300/- but Nishikanta was more interested to seek a career in London, in foreign service.

- (19) The last years of the life of Nishikanta specially show his complex nature. Not accepting a teaching assignment with his people, he approached the British Viceroy Lord Rippon, for a job in foreign service, but this could not materialise. The British Viceroy arranged for him to become the Principal of Nizam's College at Hyderabad, where he also came in close touch with Nawab's family. He even became a family tutor to Nawab's son. Later he became a Muslim and married in this family.

These later happenings made him lose his prestige in the Indian society; and his name, as Keshav Chakravorty states, has fallen in obscurity.

- (20) "*Ingrej o Bharatvasi*", "*Sadhana*", Kartik, BS 1300.
- (21) Tagore's first article on a political theme on the pages of "*Sadhana*" (see note 20) was "the English and the Indians". Later, in the 3rd and 4th year (1893-1895) of "*Sadhana*", many more of his writings, relating to politics, began to be published one after the other, giving expression to his own political views, Tagore analysed in detail the despising nature and arrogance of the British, and also revealed some weaknesses of people in his own homeland.

In his essays Tagore also denounced British colonialism and imperialism. (See Amitrasudan Bhattacharya, *Rabindranath : Sadhana o sahitya*, Calcutta, 1981, pp. 264-5).

- (22) R. Tagore : *Glimpses of Bengal*, Lnd., 1958, p. 102.
- (23) R. Tagore : *Nationalism*, Lnd., 1917, pp. 133-5.
- (24) See, for example, his poems "Africa", "The Worshipers of the Buddha", "The Atonement"... (We shall be discussing these at the end of the chapter).
- (25) See note 23.
- (26) Keshav Chakravorty, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
- (27) Romain Rolland : *Collected Works* [in Russian], vol. 20, L., 1936, p. 118.

- (28) Tagore started withdrawing from the Swadeshi movement when extremist and even terrorist tendencies became prevalent in it. He wrote : "The policy of extremism is a policy without control or sail, and so nobody can say with any certainty where it will ultimately lead to." (*R. Rach*, vol. 10, p. 504). He exclaimed : "If mad men take the responsibility for the future of the country, then our most sad task will be to save the country from the dangerous hands of such patriots." (*ibid* ; p. 530).

However, he sometimes missed difference between the activities of the leaders of the left, revolutionary wing of the liberation movement from that of the terrorists. Besides, the abstract side of his humanism was opposed to violent methods. So he did not favour use of violence in the national liberation struggle though he had deep respect for such leaders of the movement as, for instance, Aurobindo Ghosh.

We may however stress here that terrorism was totally alien to him, and he could not reconcile himself with any manifestation of it. Tagore's condemnation of terrorism is so topical for our days, when terrorism has become a menace to the whole world ! We can only admire his prophetic words about the danger of spread of terrorism.

Tagore would not have been such a great writer and humanist as we know him, had he, withdrawing from direct participation in political struggle, really denied active struggle for the liberation of his homeland. Withdrawing from active political work, he devoted more and more attention to the work of education and creative writing. Moreover, for removing the serious doubts and great disappointments which had been disturbing him, and for arriving at some conclusions from the past experience, Tagore undertakes a laborious task—he portrays in his creative works the main stages of the liberation struggle in Bengali (and essentially, in India).

His task was to show in his literary works the main problems arising from the Indian reality and to give

- type images of people, living and fighting in India in the last quarter of the 19th and in early 20th century. The outcome of this great labour was *Gora* which, in 1907-9, was published on the pages of the journal "Prabasi".
- (29) "Prabasi", Baisakh, BS 1315.
 - (30) "Prabasi", Bhadra, BS 1314 to Sravan, BS 1316 (1907-9). Eng. trs. in the "Modern Review", January to December 1923. Tr. by W. W. Pearson.
 - (31) In 1902-12 were translated 18 stories, including such famous ones as *Cabuliwallah*, *Trust Property* (*Sampati samarpan*), *The Skeleton* (*Kankal*), *The Postmaster*; the poems *Janma-katha* (*The story of birth*), *Biday* (*Farewell*); the articles, "The Problem of India", "Woman's lot in East and West" etc.
 - (32) "Prabasi"—serialized from November 1930 to April 1931 issue
 - (33) We may mention here, for instance, Tan Bogoraz's article "New India and R. Tagore" which draws parallels between Tolstoy and Tagore; and also a recently published article by Dr. S. A. Serebryany and L. I. Saranskina comparing Tagore's *The Home and The World* with Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. From India we can mention Ujjal Mazumdar's informative and interesting article in "Galpa-guchha" jubilee number.
 - (34) See R. Tagore's *Chhinna patra*.
 - (35) We read in Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" for 1877: "In the beginning I liked it [Anna Karenina] much; later, though I continued to like the details so much that I could not stop reading, on the whole I came to like it lesser.

It seemed, for instance, that the love of this "stallion Vromsky in uniform", as a friend of mine called him, could be spoken of only in a spirit of irony...

Such people, as the author, are most basically and essentially, our teachers, and we are just their pupils. What do they teach us?" (F. M. Dostoevsky : *Collected Works* [in Russian], in 30 volumes, vol. 25, M., 1983, pp. 52, 223).

- (36) R. Tagore : "Nastha-nir", "Bharati", BS 1308, Baisakh to Agrahayan; Eng. trs. "Broken home", "The Hindus-

tan Standard", Puja annual 1955, "The Broken Nest", Missouri University, 1961.

- (37) R. Tagore : *Chokher bali*, "Bangadarsan", BS 1308-1309. Eng. tr. : *Eyesore*, "The Modern Review", January to December 1914. Also Eng. tr. *Binodini*, Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1959.
- (38) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra* (Letters), vol. 8, p. 146.
- (39) *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- (40) R. Tagore : "Payla Nambar"—"Sabuj Patra", Asadh 1327. Eng. tr. : House Number One, "Hindustan Standard", Puja annual, 1953.
- (41) R. Tagore : *Shesher kavita* ("Prabasi", Bhadra to Chaitra 1335 (1928-29). Eng. tr. *Last poem* by K. Kripalani, New Delhi, 1943.
- (42) V. S. Solov'ev (1853-1900), the Russian religious philosopher, poet, publicist and critic. Son of the famous Russian historian S. M. Solov'ev (1820-1879). Studied at the faculty of physics and mathematics at Moscow University and then at the University's faculty of history and philology, graduated in 1873.

In 1880's Solov'ev wrote works advocating union between the East and West through reunification of the churches. Solov'ev's system was the most important attempt in the histories of Russian idealism to unite in a "great synthesis" Christian Platonism, German classical idealism (mainly that of F. Schelling) and scientific empiricism. Toward the end of his life Solov'ev had frequent premonitions of world catastrophe.

Solov'ev's pantheistic and evolutionary cosmology is consonant with N. F. Fedorov and K. E. Tsiolkovsky's ideas of cosmic transformation. The poems on the Sophia (eternal feminine) cycle, Solov'ev's 'eternal friend' and mystical beloved, had strong influence on the Russian symbolists. (BSE, vol. 24, p. 307).

Does it not remind us of Tagore's conception of "jivan-devata". This, along with Solov'ev's idea of union between the East and West, perhaps explains why Tagore mentions Solov'ev along with Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

- (43) "Prabasi", April '17, p. 10. Besides, there were also published articles "*Rashiyar sadharan tantra pratishtay amader ananda*" [Our happiness on the establishment of Russian republic], "*Rashiya biplabe sambhavita parokshya phal*" [The Possible, Indirect Consequences of the Russian Revolution], "*Rashiya o Bharatvarsa*" [Russia and India]—*ibid.*, pp. 10-12.
- (44) "Modern Review", July '18, pp. 1-4.
- (45) *At The Cross Roads*, by Sir Rabindranath Tagore (reprinted from the "Modern Review" for July 1918). Printed and published by A. C. Sarkar at the Brahmo Mission Press, 211, Cornwallis St., Calcutta, 12 p.
- (46) In August 1918 the British colonial powers offered the so-called Chelmsford Montague reforms. These provided only for greater involvement in the administrative organ of the colonial country, of the representatives of higher Indian society.

An extraordinary meeting of the Indian National Congress in August 1918 rejected these proposals by a majority vote, calling these "disappointing and hardly satisfying". This resulted in further intensification of the national liberation movement, with Mahatma Gandhi emerging as a nation-wide leader. Gandhi's movement of *Satyagraha*—that of non-violence—was combined with the active opposition to colonial regime.

The campaign of non-cooperation, launched by the Indian National Congress and led by Gandhi, was at first spread mainly in the cities, but as it grew, it took into its wake also the villages, involving the wide masses in the anti-British movement. (See K. A. Antonova, G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. G. Kotovsky : *Istoriya Indii ; kratkii ocherk*. [History of India ; A short Outline] M., 1973, pp. 388-9.

- (47) "Modern Review", July 1918, p. 2.
- (48) *Ibid.*
- (49) *Ibid.*
- (50) *Ibid.* p. 3.
- (51) *Ibid.* pp. 3-4.
- (52) So far as we know, the first scholar to retrieve this wonderful article from obscurity is Chinmohan Sehana-

vis (Chinmohan Sehanavis : *Tagore and the World*, Calcutta, 1961). He writes :

"...It is possible for us to pursue easily the trend of Tagore's thoughts when we read [*the article At the Cross Roads*] in July 1918 number of the "Modern Review" hardly eight months after the November Revolution in Russia", (pp 71-2).

- (53) Rathindranath Tagore : *On the Edges of Time*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 131.
- (54) Xerox copies of 11 letters of Tagore to Roerich (all known so far) and of 2 letters of Roerich to Tagore were kindly given to the author of this book, in 1984, at Bangalore, by Nikolai Roerich's son, the famous artist Svyatoslav Roerich, for which we express our sincere gratitude to him.

The other letters of Tagore to N. Roerich have been quoted by us from the Xerox copies [Hereafter, when required, referred to as Xerox copy] of the originals preserved in Rabindra Bhavan. We take this opportunity of expressing our gratitude to the Rabindra Bhavana authorities for permission to use these materials and for all help in our work.

- (55) These and other facts given here have been taken by us from Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya's article on "Nikolai Roerich and Rabindranath" published in "Desh", the Calcutta Bengali journal (7 Jan. 1976, pp. 11-3)—the only article we know on the subject.
- (56) R. Tagore : *Letters from Abroad*, Madras, 1924, p. 24. This letter forms the enclosure of Tagore's letter to Andrews, with a note : "The enclosed letter I wrote to a great Russian artist. Show it to Nandalal and give him my blessings." (*ibid.* p. 26).

The subsequent, enlarged edition of Tagore's Letters to Andrews, published under the title *Letters to a friend* does not include this letter...

- (57) Xerox copy.
- (58) N. Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo nasledstva* [From Literary Heritage], M., 1974, p. 111.
- (59) *Ibid.*

- (60) We have not been able to consult this journal "Art", but references to this are available in M. F. Belikov's authentic article "Nikolai Roerich and India" (in Russian)—in *Strany i narody Vostoka* [The Land and the people of the East], No. xiv, M., Nauka, 1974, p. 215.
- (61) N. Roerich : *Altai-Gimalaya* [Altai—The Himalayas], M., Mysl', 1974, p. 14.
- (62) See L. Mitrokhin : "Nikolai Roerich and Rabindranath Tagore ; history of correspondence."—"Soviet Land", Oct. 1984, p. 30.
- (63) *Ibid.*
- (64) Xerox copy.
- (65) Tan (V. G. Bogoraz) : *Za chertoyu osedlosti* [Beyond the Lines],—"Rossiya", 1925, no. 1, p. 200.
- (66) A. I. Yunel' : *Sovetsko-indiiskie svyazi 1917-1939* [Soviet-Indian Relations, 1917-1939]. M., Nauka, 1979, p. 102. (*Afterwards Yunel*).
- (67) *Rabindranath Tagor-drug sovetskogo soyuza, sbornik dokumentov i materialov* [R. Tagore, Friend of the Soviet Union : Collection of Documents and Materials]. Ed. by V. A. Vdovin and L. S. Gamayunov M, Izd. Vost. lit., 1961 p. 66. [Hereafter RTF].
- (68) R. Tagore : *Letters from Russia*, tr. by Sasadhar Sinha Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1960, p. 221. Hereafter, LR).
- (69) "Prabasi", Asadh BS 1329.
- (70) Bogdanov was a teacher of Persian, modern and mediaeval, at Santiniketan, from 1923 to 1930. He was a Russian emigre; and a monarchist by conviction. According to Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya, Tagore was not happy with him. Besides, in his letter of 28 July 1930 to Vidhusekhar Sastri he hinted that the cost of maintaining the foreigners, including Bogdanov, was much higher than what was paid to a native teacher, and even then he had tried to have Bogdanov's term extended by some time. Bogdanov did not properly appreciate Tagore's good-will, and even spoke badly of Visva Bharati to outsiders.
- (71) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *Rabindra jivani...* [Rabindranath's Life], vol. 3, Calcutta, 1946, p. 380.

- (72) In her book *The Great Wanderer* (Calcutta, 1961, pp. 202-3), Maitreyi Devi writes that "Il'ya Tolstoy, the second son of Count Tolstoy...translated some of his poems into Russian..." She also writes: "Why the Russians are so fond of Tagore is somewhat apparent from an article written by Sudhindra Bose as early as 1918, where he records a talk with Il'ya Tolstoy. The article is revealing and shows that the Russian admiration for Tagore is neither recent, nor made up thing. Its roots lie deep in the nature of the two nations."

Comparing the attitude of Il'ya Tolstoy and R. Tagore to America, Maitreyi Devi adds that the many comments made by the Poet himself on the ways of living in America also echo the reasons why Il'ya Tolstoy could not take to that country.

She further quotes from the aforementioned article: "Do you know the difference between America and Russia?" Speaks the Russian noble [Il'ya To'stoy]. It is simply this: if a man in America is poor, is not making enough money, Americans think there is something wrong with him. In Russia, on the other hand, if a person is found making too much money, Russians will be shocked and they will wonder if there is not something radically wrong with the man. (*Ibid.*, p. 205).

- (73) In 1924, persuaded that the Soviet state was growing stronger politically and economically and increasing its international influence, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, Greece, Norway, Sweden, China, Denmark, Mexico and France granted the USSR *de jure* recognition and established diplomatic relations. Japan followed the following year. (*GSE*, vol. 31, pp. 174-5).
- (74) R. Tagore *Talks in China*; Calcutta, Visva-Bharati, 1925.
- (75) L. M. Karakhan (1889-1937): Soviet statesman and diplomat. He became a member of the RSDLP from the age of 15. In 1905, he moved to Harbin where he was an active underground worker of socialist organisations.

In August 1917, he became a member of the Presidium of the Petrograd Soviet. After the October Revo-

- lution, from 1918-20, he was Deputy Peoples' Commissar for Foreign Affairs, then Plenipotentiary in Poland in 1921-23, in China in 1923-26. (He was also the Secretary of the Soviet delegation at the Brest-Litovsk Peace talks with Germany). He again became Deputy Peoples' Commissar for Foreign Affairs in 1927-34, and ambassador to Turkey from 1934-37.
- (76) Japan Chronicle (17 May, 1924), quoting 14 May Kokusai dispatch from Peking. Quoted by Stephen N. Hay in his *Asian Ideas of East and West* (Cambridge, Mass. 1970), p. 75.
- (77) It came to be widely known after the publication of the above book of Stephen N. Hay. Stephen Hay states in his notes : In the Tagore-Karakhan interview was not reported in any of the accounts of the tour written by members of Tagore's party, probably because the Government of India was quite worried about the possible influence of Communist propaganda on Indian nationalism and was at that very moment arraigning suspected Indian Communists on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government." (*Ibid.*, p. 375).
- (78) Stephen N. Hay : *Op. cit.* pp. 162, 169.
- (79) *Ibid.*, p. 147.
 Sun Yat-Sen wrote in his invitation letter : "In you (Tagore) I shall greet not only a writer who has added lustre to Indian letters but a rare worker in those fields of endeavour wherein lie the seeds of man's future welfare and spiritual triumphs." (Stephen Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 147).
- (80) *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.
- (81) *Ibid.* p. 174. Stephen Hay also quotes Elmhirst's diary (13 May, 1924) apparently not published.
- (82) Yunel', p. 105.
- (83) USSR. Ministry of External Affairs : *Dokumenty vne-shnei politiki SSSR* (Documents of Foreign Policy of USSR), Vol. VII, M., 1963, p. 469.—Telegram of 4 August, 1925 to Soviet plenipotentiary in Turkey, Ya. Z. Surits.
- (84) "Pravda", 18. VIII. 1925, Also mentioned in RTF, p. 15

- (85) This is how the Western imperialist powers, like Great Britain, France, called the European countries bordering on Soviet Union—for example, Poland, Rumania, etc.
- (86) "Krasnaya gazeta" (Red Newspaper), L., 8 Sept. 1925, Quoted in Yunel', p. 107.
- (87) "Manchester Guardian", 6 Aug. 1926.
- (88) A. Ya. Arosev (1890-1938), Soviet Party and state figure. Member of the Communist Party from 1907. In June 1917, he became a member of the Bolshevik military organisation, and later Commander of the troops of Moscow military district. During 1924-1933 he was in diplomatic assignment. From 1934, he became Chairman of VOKS.
First emerged as a writer in 1926. In his works he depicted the revolutionary underground under Czarism, and selfless activity of the Bolsheviks in conditions of civil war. (GSE, vol. 2, p. 366).
- (89) A. Ya. Arosev : "Review of Tagore's *The Home and The World*"—"Krasnaya nov' ", 1922, no. 3, May-June, pp. 272-3.
- (90) RTF, p. 39.
- (91) A. Ya. Arosev : *Moi vstrechi s Tagorom* [My Meetings with Tagore],—"30 dnei" ("30 ways"), 1926, no. 119. p. 89.
- (92) *Ibid.*
- (93) *Ibid.*
- (94) Nepal Majumdar : *Bharate jatiyata o antarjatikata even Rabindranath* (Nationalism and Internationalism in India and Rabindranath), vol. iii, Calcutta, Catuskon Pvt. Ltd., 1968 (B.S. 1394), pp. 193. (Hereafter NM).
- (95) The All-Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) was a social organisation, established in 1925, with a view to familiarizing the people of the Soviet Union with the culture of peoples of foreign countries and to popularising abroad the attainments of the culture of the peoples of USSR. It ceased to function after the formation, on 18 February 1958, of the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. (RTF, p. 37).

- (96) RTF, p. 37.
- (97) *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.
- (98) I. M. Maisky (1884-1975) : Soviet diplomat, historian and publicist. He was a member of the RSDLP from 1903. After the October Revolution, from 1922, he took up diplomatic assignments. In 1926 he was Acting Chairman of VOKS. In 1932-1943 he was ambassador of the USSR in Great Britain. He participated in the work of Yalta and Potsdam conferences (1945) of the government leaders of the USSR in Great Britain.
Since 1946, engaged in scholarly work and teaching. (*GSE*, vol. 15, p. 333).
- (99) The invitation to Tagore from VOKS was officially handed over him through the diplomatic representation in Germany.
- (100) USSR. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs : Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Documents of Foreign policy of USSR), vol. ix, M., 1964, p. 499.
- (101) V. E. Meyerhold (1874-1940) : Famous Soviet director and actor. In 1898 he joined the company of the Moscow art theatre which he left in 1902. In 1902-1905 he headed the Society of New Drama. From 1908, continued his directorial activity in the Aleksandrinsky Theatre (St. Petersburg). His aesthetic principles are based on symbolism, the stylized, unconventional theatre and subordination of acting to visual and decorative elements.
The most important productions at the Moscow theatre, which he headed from 1920 to 1938, were aimed at creating an art whose content and inherent dynamic form would reflect the spirit of the revolution. These productions were closely connected with V.V. Mayakovsky's poetry and drama. (*GSE* vol. 16, p. 242)
- (102) M. P. Pavlovich (1871-1927) : From 1898, he was a member of the RSDLP. In 1901, he went to Paris where he worked for the newspaper "Iskra". Between 1907 and 1917 he was an emigre in France.

After the October Revolution of 1917 he worked in the Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Between

1921 and 1927 he was the Chairman of the All-Russian Scientific Association for Oriental Studies and the Rector of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies.

Pavlovich was the author of works dealing with the history of national liberation movements in the countries of the East. (*GSE*, vol. 19, p. 360).

- (103) Yunel', p. 131.
- (104) *Ibid.*
- (105) S. F. Ol'denburg : "Rabindranath Tagore"—"Ogonek" [Spark], 1926, no. 51.
- (106) The Ode was read at the reception to Tagore in the Hall of Columns on 24 September 1930 and published in RTF, p. 41.
- (107) Vera Novikova : *R. Tagore in Russian and Soviet Criticism and Translation* [in Russian], p. 336.
- (108) RTF, p. 39.
- (109) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, vol. 2.
- (110) RTF, p. 39.
- (111) USSR. Ministry of Foreign Affairs : *op. cit.*, vol. ix, p. 736. See also note 197.
- (112) *Ibid.*
- (113) Yunel', p. 131.
- (114) *Ibid.*
- (115) A. G-r. *V gostyakh u Tagora* [*Visiting Tagore*]—"Krasnaya Niva", 1927, no. 5, p. 17.
- (116) *Ibid.*
- (117) Quoted from the Xerox copy of the original. See also "Soviet Land", May 1984.
- (118) Yunel', p. 90.
- (119) On 12 May 1927, the offices of the Soviet trade company Arcos and the Soviet trade delegation were raided. On 17 May the Soviet government sent a note pointing out that the break in the relations that the British were trying to provoke would hurt Great Britain most of all. The British government nevertheless broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR. (*GSE*, vol. 31, p. 175).
- (120) Yunel', p. 91.
- (121) *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- (122) *Ibid.*, p. 94.

- (123) D. G. Tendulkar : *Mahatma ; Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* Bombay, 1951, vol. 2, p. 439. Quoted in Yunel', p. 27.
- (124) RTF, pp. 42-3.
- (125) *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.
- (126) Yunel', pp. 144-5.
- (127) *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- (128) Vera Novikova : *op. cit.*, p. 336.
- (129) RTF, pp. 45-6.
- (130) NM, p. 51.
- (131) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- (132) *Ibid.*
- (133) *Ibid.*
- (134) In April 1930 there began a fresh campaign of civil disobedience under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The British powers declared the Indian National Congress illegal. Mahatma Gandhi and J. Nehru were arrested. By the end of 1930, about 60,000 people had been arrested. (K. A. Antonova *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 422).
- (135) Nepal Majumdar : *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 52-53.
- (136) Krishna Kripalani : *Tagore : a biography*, Lnd., 1962, p. 345.
- (137) NM, p. 57.
- (138) LR, p. 134.
- (139) "The Modern Review", Aug. 1930, p. 240.
- (140) R. Tagore : *Religion of Man*. Lnd., 1931.
- (141) NM, p. 60.
- (142) *Ibid.*
- (143) *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- (144) *Ibid.*
- (145) *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- (146) *Ibid.*, p. 705.
- (147) NM, photo between pp. 76 and 77.
- (148) RTF, p. 18, note 17.
- (149) NM, p. 103.
- (150) *Ibid.*
- (151) USSR. Ministry of Foreign Affairs : *op. cit.*, vol. xiii, p. 407.
- (152) RTF, p. 199.

- (153) Smolensk, a city west of Moscow.
Has been in existence since A.D. 863.
- (154) Amiya Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-2.
- (155) *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- (156) *Ibid.*
- (157) See note 67.
- (158) Vera Inber (1890-1972) Soviet Russian writer. Began to publish her works from 1910. Her early poems are marked by the love of life and elegant sober irony that were characteristic of her mature work. She is a poetess of calm meditation and persiveness.
Besides being a poetess, Vera Inber was also a journalist (for instance, *Travel Notes in America and Paris*, 1922 ; the autobiographical chronicle *A Place under the Sun*, 1928.
(*GSE*, vol. 10, p. 175).
- (159) RTF, p. 197. Apart from RTF and LR we also used the typed copy of the chronicle of Tagore's visit to Russia as available in Rabindra Bhavan at Santiniketan, for which we acknowledge our indebtedness to the authorities and staff of Rabindra Bhavana. (Hereafter, Typed copy). See RTF, pp. 197-200, and Typed copy.
- (160) LR, p. 160.
- (161) *Ibid.* p. 161-2.
- (162) *Ibid.*, pp. 162-4.
- (163) Association of Unions of Soviet Writers of RSFSR—an association of unions of writers of different trends.
- (164) N. N. Aseev (1889-1963) : Soviet Russian poet. He was first published in 1913, and the first collection was influenced by symbolist poetry. The literary contact with V. V. Mayakovsky (starting in 1913) helped mould Aseev's talent.
The motifs of the youthfulness of the new world and the image of time flying by are the central point in Aseev's poetry. (*GSE*, vol. 2, p. 397).
- (165) F. V. Gladkov (1883-1958) : An eminent Russian Soviet writer. Began to publish a newspaper in 1900. He was in correspondence with Maksim Gorky since 1901. In 1906 Gladkov participated in the revolution-

ary social democratic movement. He was arrested and exiled for three years to Siberia.

After the October Revolution he was in the Bolshevik underground in the Kuban region.

Gladkov's novel *Cement* (1925) became widely known. He portrayed communists. As Gorky said, this novel was the first since the Revolution to firmly seize and clearly illuminate the most important theme of the times—labour. *Cement* is one of the classic works of Soviet literature. In the novel *Power* (1932-1938) he tried to depict the energy of the masses swept by the idea of socialist construction. In the post-war years he wrote the autobiographical trilogy, thus, continuing in many respects Gorkian traditions. (*GSE*, vol. 6, p. 489).

- (166) N. Ognev (1888-1938) : Well-known Russian Soviet writer. His real name was M. G. Rozanov. His work *Dnevnik Kosti Ryabtseva* (Kostya Ryabtsev's Diary) so well portrays the atmosphere and way of life of the school of that time that the earliest critics took it for a real document.

(*Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya* [A Short Encyclopaedia of Literature], vol. 6.

- (167) Albert Rhys Williams (1883-) ; an author. Fellow, Cambridge University, England, and Marburg University, Germany, 1908. Correspondent of the journal "The Outlook" in 1914-1915.

Visited Russia in 1917-18. Worked as assistant in the Soviet Russia's Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

Prepared propaganda sent into Germany ; organised International Legion in Red Army. In Russia, gathered material on Russian folk-life and customs in 1922-28, also in 1930-31, 1937-38.

Lecturer in Cornell University, US, 1943-44.

Author of *In the Claws of the German Eagle*, 1917 ; *Lenin, the Man and His Work*, 1919 ; (pamphlet) *76 Questions and Answers ; Through the Russian Revolution*, 1921 ; *The Russian Land*, 1928 ; *The Soviets*,

1937 (5th ed., 1946) ; *The Russians : The Land, The People and Why They Fight*, 1943 (6th ed., 1945).

- (168) (Mme) Litvinova, Lecturer in foreign languages in Moscow ; wife of M. Litvinov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of USSR at that time.
- (169) RTF, p. 197. Also Typed copy.
- (170) RTF, pp. 46-7.
- (171) P. S. Kogan (1872-1932). Soviet literary historian and Marxist critic. The main books published before the Revolution from Marxist standpoint were : *Essays on the History of Western European Literature*, vols. 1-3, 1903-10, *Essays on the History of Ancient Literature* (1907), *History of the Recent Russian Literature*, vols. 1-3, 1908-12.

Professor of the Moscow University and other higher educational institutions and President of the State Academy of Arts Studies (1921). (*GSE*, vol. 12, p. 563).

- (172) Typed copy.
- (173) LR, pp. 169-72.
- (174) LR, pp. 172-3.
- (175) *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- (176) Jhara Basu : *op. cit.*, pp. 1-3.
- (177) RTF, p. 49.
- (178) *Ibid.*, pp. 50-3.
- (179) *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- (180) *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 63.
- (181) *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- (182) M. A. Vrubel' (1856-1910) : Russian painter. Studied at the St. Petersburg Academy of Art (1880-84). Travelled extensively in Italy and France and visited Germany, Greece and Switzerland. Following the tradition of A. A. Ivanov and N. N. Ge, Vrubel' addressed himself in his art to problems of being, to moral and philosophical questions of good and evil, and to man's place in the universe.

Under the conditions of the complex and contradictory development of Russian artistic culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the desire to resolve these problems led Vrubel', who stood apart from the

social struggle of his time and who saw no real way of overcoming the acute contradictions of a bourgeois society, to a tormented search for a solution solely within man's inner, spiritual life.

The manysidedness of his creativity as an expression of his dream of the unity of art with life, the search for a lofty monumental style and a national form of art, and the predilection for ornamental and rhythmically intricate solutions invested his works, with the characteristic traits of the 'modern' style.

Vrubel' also painted a number of portraits marked by a philosophical depth of images and the striving to emphasize the unusual in the model. (*GSE*, vol. 5, p. 627).

- (183) LR, pp. 190-3 ; RTF, pp. 63-7.
- (184) RTF, p. 198.
- (185) LR, p. 173.
- (186) RTF, p. 71.
- (187) RTF, p. 72.
- (188) LR, p. 212.
- (189) Purabi Roy : "Kavi o Soviet Desh" [The Poet and the Land of the Soviets]—"Maitree", p. 41.
- (190) Fedor Petrov : "Rabindra sakashe" [With Rabindranath],—"Saptaha" (in Bengali), 9.5.1969, p. 5.
- (191) Purabi Roy : *op. cit.*
- (192) *Ibid.*
- (193) LR, pp. 173-5.
- (194) F. Petrov, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- (195) Typed copy.
- (196) S. M. Eisenstein (1898-1948) : Soviet motion-picture director, theoretician of art and teacher. In 1918 he went to work on Red Army agitational trains. In 1920 he was in charge of stage design for the first Proletkult's Workers' Theatre in Moscow. He studied under V. E. Meyerhold at the State School for Advanced Stage Direction in 1921-1922, and together with S. I. Yutkevich he staged a series of performances at the Mastfor Theatre.

His first independent production was *The Wise Man*, based on A. N. Ostrovsky's comedy *Even a Wise Man Stumbles* (1923).

Eisenstein's *Strike* (released 1925) was the first film to depict the revolutionary masses as the moving force of history. The ideological and aesthetic principles of *Strike* were developed in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), one of the greatest achievements of Soviet and world film-making. With classical perfection the film embodied the theme of revolution as a struggle for equality, freedom and human dignity. In *October* (1927), Eisenstein, director G. V. Aleksandrov, cameraman E. K. Tisse recreated the events of 1917 and made the first attempt to depict V. I. Lenin in a feature film.

Between 1929 and 1932, Eisenstein, Aleksandrov and Tisse worked in France, the United States and Mexico.

After returning to his homeland, Eisenstein continued his work as a director, theoretician and teacher. (*GSE*, vol. 29, p. 339).

- (197) One correspondent who interviewed Tagore in Germany before his departure for USSR, writes under the pseudonym "A Darsaka" : "...there is the vast output of creative work which keeps on flowing unceasingly from the Poet's pen. I had the privilege of reading the manuscript of his latest story written in a new technique and designed to appear in a screen version, possibly from the studio of Eisenstein."

This subject has not lost its importance to this day. For example, according to a report in the "Statesman", Calcutta, 3 March 1986, Mr. Naum Kleiman, the Director of the Eisenstein Archive in Moscow, while delivering an invitation lecture organised by the Eisenstein Cine Club in Calcutta, identified the wife of Eisenstein, Vera Atasheva, in the photo of Tagore with a group of cinema workers of Moscow. Tagore missed a meeting with Eisenstein because the latter was in America when he visited Russia. Mr. Kleiman, the report states, promised to write back, giving more details.

"Darsaka" continues :

"Tagore was going to Russia to get a first hand knowledge of conditions there, for nothing perhaps has even been blackened so indiscriminately as the political and social experiment of Bolshevist Russia".

Darsaka also mentions about the attempts to dissuade Tagore from visiting Russia : "A stream of letters had been coming to the Poet asking him to abandon his proposed visit to the capital of the Soviets. They had evoked from the poet little more than a sneering smile." ("Europe behind the Veil", a travel diary, by 'Darsaka', "Hindu Illustrated Weekly", Madras, 23.11.1930). See also note 111.

- (198) Quoted from "Izvestiya". See A. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *Rabindranath Tagore, a Great Humanitarian*, "Far Eastern Affairs", 1981, no. 2, pp. 139-40.
- (199) LR, p. 178.
- (200) *Ibid.*
- (201) *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- (202) *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- (203) *Ibid.*, pp. 179-87.
- (204) *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- (205) S. T. Shatsky (1878-1934) : Soviet educator, member of the Collegium of the Peoples' Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, 1929-34. He graduated from the Moscow University, began his educational work in 1905, when he organised the first clubs in Russia for the children of workers. In 1911, using public funds he and his wife O. D. Shatskaya organised summer work colony known as "Cheerful Life" for the members of the Children's Clubs.

After the October Revolution he became head of the First Public Education Experiment Station of the Peoples' Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, he held this position from 1919 to 1932. It was a complex of pedagogical scientific research institutions, kindergartens, schools, extra-curricular establishments for children, and cultural-educational establishments for adults. Particular attention was given to combining education with socially useful labour, to making class-

room instruction more efficient, to developing group awareness, and to studying the interdependence of the school and its environment.

From 1932 to 1934 Shatsky headed the Central Experimental Laboratory of the Peoples' Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR and served as the Director of the Moscow Conservatory. (*GSE*, vol. 29, p. 548).

- (206) Typed copy.
- (207) *Ibid.*
- (208) S. Severtsev : "From Scroll of Memory",—"Soviet Land", Sept. 1985, no. 17, pp. 34-5.
- (209) LR, p. 193.
- (210) *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- (211) RTF, p. 199.
- (212) Typed copy.
- (213) LR, p. 6.
- (214) *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.
- (215) *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- (216) *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
- (217) Typed copy.
- (218) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra* (Letters), vol. 4, p. 217.
- (219) R. Tagore : *Rashiyar chithi* (in Bengali), Calcutta, Visva-Bharati granthalaya, 1961. [Hereafter, R. Ch], p. 1.

We translated from original Bengali when we found that the passages to be quoted were either partly or fully omitted (without elision marks) in the English translation made by Sasadhar Sinha and published by Visva Bharati or had, in our opinion, some discrepancies. Still, due references are given where this Visva Bharati edition is used (Quoted as LR).

While translating from Bengali, we also used, where possible, available English translations other than that of Sasadhar Sinha.

- (220) LR, p. 3.
- (221) *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
- (222) *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- (223) RTF, p. 199.
- (224) *Ibid.*

- (225) *Ibid.* In the Soviet documentary film on Tagore's visit to Russia, we see the Poet in Kremlin.
- (226) Typed copy.
- (227) RTF, p. 199.
- (228) *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- (229) *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- (230) RTF, p. 81.
- (231) *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- (232) *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- (233) Fedor Petrov : *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- (234) RTF, pp. 84-5.
- (235) LR, pp. 208-10.
- (236) Fedor Petrov, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- (237) LR, pp. 210-2.
- (238) Fedor Petrov, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- (239) LR, p. 212.
- (240) *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- (241) R. Ch. pp. 9-10.
- (242) LR, p. 14.
- (243) R. Ch., p. 9.
- (244) RTF. p. 200.
- (245) LR, pp. 213-4.
- (246) For example, see "Manchester Guardian Weekly", 17 Oct.'30. Still some other Western press reportings give neutral captions, for example, the caption "Rabindra-nath Tagore and Education in Russia" in the "Scottish Educational Journal" (Edinburgh), 12 Dec.'30.
- (247) See, for example, "The Literary Digest", 1 Nov.'30.
- (248) NM, pp. 137-8. Maitreyi Devi rightly notes : "I hope I won't be blamed for selecting only the pieces containing good remarks, as I have no reason to do so. Once when pestered by American reporters about political question in India, the Poet replied that he discussed India's affairs in two countries only, in India and in England, as she was directly responsible. May be, he had the same idea about the Russian situation. All that he disliked about their system, he spoke out frankly in Russia but he repeated these views very seldom elsewhere." (Maitreyi Devi, *op. cit.*, p. 199).

- (249) LR, p. 216.
- (250) RTF, p. 200.
- (251) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- (252) LR, p. 217.
- (253) See our comments in note 219.
- (254) LR, p. 19.
- (255) *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- (256) *Ibid.*
- (257) *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- (258) *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.
- (259) *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.
- (260) R. Ch. p. 22.
- (261) *Ibid.*
- (262) LR, p. 28.
- (263) *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- (264) *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- (265) *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- (266) *Ibid.*
- (267) *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- (268) R. Ch., p. 35.
- (269) "Katha-Sahitya", asadha-sravana, BS 1376, p. 1273.
- (270) LR, p. 43.
- (271) *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2.
- (272) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- (273) *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- (274) *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- (275) *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- (276) *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- (277) *Ibid.*
- (278) This letter in full form will be published in vol. xii of Tagore's *Chithi-patra*. Quoted here from the proof-copy (p. 141), for which we express our indebtedness to Rabindra Bhavana.
 This letter was partly published in *Rassiar Chithi* (letter No. 8), though without the passage quoted here.
- (279) LR, p. 53.
- (280) R. Ch., pp. 55.
- (281) R. Ch., pp. 55-6. Part of it is found omitted, in Sasadhar Sinha's English translation, and without any indication of the omission.

- (282) LR., p. 60.
- (283) R. Ch., p. 56 (Second part of the quotation is found omitted in S. Sinha's English translation without the elision mark).
- (284) LR., pp. 72-3.
- (285) *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- (286) *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- (287) *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- (288) R. Ch., p. 60.
- (289) LR., pp. 64-5.
- (290) R. Ch., p. 65. (A big portion of the letter is found omitted in S. Sinha's English translation without elision mark).
- (291) LR., p. 66.
- (292) *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- (293) *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9.
- (294) *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.
- (295) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 2, pp. 97-8.
- (296) NM, p. 142.
- (297) NM, pp. 127-8.
- (298) Quoted in NM, p. 128.
- (299) Tagore's stay in US from 9 October to 18 December 1930.
- (300) Quoted in NM, p. 139.
- (301) Clarence Pickett : *For more than bread*, NY, 1953, p. 92. Quoted in NM, p. 140.
- (302) Quoted in NM, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- (303) Quoted in NM, p. 140.
- (304) NM, p. 143.
- (305) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 387-8.
- (306) "New York Review", 25 Oct. '30.
- (307) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 2, p. 76.
- (308) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 387.
- (309) NM, p. 143.
- (310) Sujit Mukherjee : *Passages to America*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 100.
- (311) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 2, p. 96.
- (312) "Visva-Bharati Patrika", Baisakha-asadha, BS 1372, p. 286.

- (313) *Ibid.*
- (314) LR, pp. 218-9.
- (315) R. Ch., p. 93.
- (316) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- (317) *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
- (318) *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- (319) *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- (320) *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- (321) *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- (322) *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- (323) *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- (324) See, for instance, Nepal Mazumdar's *Bharate jatiyata o antarjatikta evam Rabindranath* (Nationalism and Internationalism in India, and Rabindranath), Vol. 2 ; Chinmohan Sehanavis's *Rabindranather antarjatik chinta* (Rabindranath's International Thinking) ; Satyendranath Ray's "*Rabindranather e-jibaner tirthadarshan*" (Rabindranath's This Life's pilgrimage) in the book *Tirthadarshan-er panchas bachhar* (Fifty years of Pilgrimage, 3rd ed. Calcutta, 1984, pp. 17-28)...

These works give balanced views on Tagore's positive and negative statements.

But, unfortunately, different is Saumyendranath Basu's pamphlet *Rabindranath o Rassiar Chithi* (Rabindra-nath and Letters from Russia), published by Tagore Research Institute, Calcutta, in 1983, on the basis of the Calcutta University Girishchandra Ghosh Lecture, 1982.

Written by a known and respected scholar, the Director of the Tagore Research Institute, which does good work for promoting Tagore's literary heritage, amongst the Bengali intelligentsia, brings out valuable publications on Tagore, this pamphlet greatly surprises us. The author had, of course, the right to give his own assessment of Tagore's *Letters* but when he gives unbalanced exposition of Tagore's negative statements, this does, in our view, distort Tagore's image.

What surprises one the most is that Dr. Basu reproduces the facts wrongly though, judging from the references given in the book, he had at his disposal the

Bengali version of the authentic collection of documents "R. Tagore : Friend of the Soviet Union".

For instance, Dr. Basu writes : "During his (Tagore's) 14-day stay (in Russia) no worth mentioning political leader met him. Not even Lunacharsky, Minister of Education 'and Culture' (*sic.*). No worth-mentioning litterateur or artist contacted him." (S. Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 6).

Was L. Karakhan, the first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,—the Minister himself was abroad at that time, but his wife was there at the reception—not a "worth-mentioning political leader" for Dr. Basu ? L. Karakhan, as we have seen, invited Tagore not only at his official residence but also at his summer villa.

Were the eminent prose-writer, Gladkov (a friend of Gorky) ; the well-known poetess and writer Vera Inber ; or the famous poet Aseev (the friend and closest follower of V. V. Mayakovsky) not really worth-mentioning writers ? !

And were the Director of the Tretyakov Art Gallery and other art critics not important figures of the art world ?? ! Why all this ?

(325) R. Ch., p. 110.

(326) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(327) *Ibid.*, p. 112.

(328) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 11, p. 196.

(329) R. Ch., p. 100.

(330) *Ibid.*, p. 96.

(331) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(332) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(333) *Ibid.*, p. 95.

(334) VBQ, Vol. 8, Pt. iii, 1930-1931, pp. 200-201. Quoted in NM, p. 170.

(335) R. Ch., p. 100.

(336) *Ibid.*, p. 117.

(337) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(338) *Ibid.*, p. 101.

(339) *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

(340) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

(341) *Ibid.*, p. 98.

- (342) *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- (343) *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- (344) *Ibid.*
- (345) *Ibid.*
- (346) *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- (347) *Ibid.*
- (348) *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.
- (349) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- (350) *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- (351) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- (352) *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- (353) *Ibid.*
- (354) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6 ; 104.
- (355) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- (356) *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- (357) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- (358) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- (359) LR., p. 95.
- (360) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.
- (361) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- (362) "Prabasi", Sravan BS 1369, p. 459.
- (363) *Ibid.*
- (364) *Ibid.*
- (365) *Ibid.*, p. 458.
- (366) *Ibid.*
- (367) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 2, p. 103.
- (368) *Ibid.*
- (369) *Ibid.*
- (370) *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- (371) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- (372) "The Modern Review", Nov. 1930, pp. 586-7.
- (373) *Ibid.*, Dec. 1930, pp. 701-2.
- (374) "Literary Digest", 1 Nov. 1930, p. 19.
- (375) *Ibid.*
- (376) *Ibid.*
- (377) *Ibid.*
- (378) *Ibid.*
- (379) "Daily News", Colombo, Ceylon, 22 Dec. 1930.

- (380) A. G. Shelley : "Rabindranath Tagore and Education in Russia" "Scottish Educational Journal", Edinburgh, 12 Dec. 1930.
- (381) *Ibid.*
- (382) Quoted in RTF, pp. 88-9.
- (383) NM, p. 154.
- 384) "The Modern Review", Jan. 1931, pp. 119-20.
- (385) *Ibid.*
- (386) NM, p. 154.
- (387) "Desh", 8 July 1961, p. 865.
- (388) *Ibid.*
- (389) Photo copy.
- (390) Photo copy.
- (391) Photo copy.
- (392) "Desh", 8 July '61, p. 865.
- (393) *Ibid.*, p. 866.
- (394) Stephen Hay : "Tagore in America",—in : *Rabindranath Tagore : American Interpretations*, Calcutta, Writers Workshop, 1981, pp. 18-54. See p. 42.
- (395) J. L. Dees : *Tagore and America*, 1961, p. 31.
- (396) S. Mukherjee : *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- (397) J. L. Dees : *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.
- (398) 'A yellow newspaper' "North Side News", 30 Nov. 1930. (Quoted in Stephen N. Hay : *op. cit.*, p. 42).
- (399) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 3, p. 86.
- (400) *Ibid.*
- (401) *Ibid.*
- (402) *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- (403) *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- (404) "New York American", 26 Nov. 1930. Quoted in NM, p. 155.
- (405) Stephen Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- (406) NM, p. 155.
- (407) "New York Times", 27 Nov. 1930.
- (408) "New York American" (Quoted in NM, p. 156).
- (409) "Sunday Chronicle" (Manchester), 28 Dec. 1930. Quoted in NM, pp. 155-6.
- (410) "New York Herald Tribune", Dec. 1930.
- (411) "New York Times", 27 Nov. 1930.

- (412) "The Jewish Standard", 28 Nov. 1930. Quoted in NM, p. 160
- (413) *Ibid.*
- (414) "New York Times", 2 Dec. 1930.
- (145) VBQ, 1930-1, pt. iii, pp. 236-40.
- (416) *Ibid.*
- (417) *Ibid.*
- (418) "Desh", 8 July, 1961, p. 866.
- (419) *Ibid.*
- (420) *Ibid.*,
- (421) "Soviet Land", May 1969.
- (422) L. Mitrokhin : *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31.
- (423) NM, p. 169
- (424) *Ibid.* p. 170
- (425) RTF, p. 148.
- (426) "Times of India", 31 Jan. 1931.
- (427) NM, p. 177.
- (428) LR., p. 137.
- (429) *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.
- (430) LR, pp. 138, 139.
- (431) *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.
- (432) R. Tagore : *palliseba, palliprakriti* (Rural Service, Rural Nature), p. 58.
- (433) *The Golden Book of Tagore ; A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of his Seventieth Birthday.* Ed. by Ramananda Chatterjee, Calcutta, 1931.
- (434) *Ibid.*
- (435) *Ibid.*
- (436) RTF, p. 156.
- (437) Xerox copy.
- (438) Xerox copy.
- (439) N. K. Roerich : *Derzhava sveta* [The Empire of Light], NY, 1931, pp. 252-3.
- (440) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 287.
- (441) Quoted in NM, pp. 129-30.
- (442) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 5, p. 37.
- (443) Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 287.
- (444) "The Modern Review", Jan. 1934, p. 96.

- (445) R. Tagore : *Rabindra Rachanavali*, Khanda 1-27 (Collected Works, in 27 volumes), Calcutta, Visva Bharati, 1939-71, (further R. Rach), vol. 22, Calcutta, 1957, p. 448.
- (446) Xerox copy. The first Congress of Writers of USSR was held in summer 1934 in Moscow under the patronage of M. Gorky. It was this Congress that established the USSR Writers Union and put final end to the vulgar-sociological approach to literary activity. It united all the writers of USSR of most diverse trends, thus setting a new stage in the history of Soviet literature.
- Tagore's letter is specially important and valuable because it shows that he not only knew contemporary Soviet literature but also highly valued it.
- In the letter sending his "best wishes and humble respects" to this All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers Tagore also openly speaks of the "over-vigilance of the custom-examination authorities".
- (447) In 1935 a group of unscrupulous businessman led by a certain Mr. Louis Horch (who pretending to be a patron of art and, winning N. Roerich's trust, had become the President of the management committee of Roerich Museum in New York), by judicial cunningness and wickedness, usurped the property of the Roerich Museum, including Roerich's own paintings.
- This Museum, as we know, had been built by Roerich in the course of almost 15 years, and was a dear offspring to him.
- (448) N. Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo naslediya*, M. 1974, p. 236.
- (449) File no. 55/35, Government of India, Home Department (Political), notes on the political activities of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and the question of invitation to him from the Delhi University. See note 446. See also Mitrokhin, *op. cit.* There also are a lot of files on Roerich with British intelligence reports against him, mainly about barring his entry into India.
- (450) On 17 February 1937, he delivers the convocation address (in Bengali, for the first time) at the Calcutta University. On 21 February, he addresses the confer-

ence of Bengali litterateurs at Chandernagore. And on 3 March he speaks at the centenary of Ramakrishna's "Parliament of Religions".

- (451) Nikolai Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo naslediya*, pp. 111-7.
- (452) See, for instance, Tagore's Letter to VOKS referred to in note 446.
- (453) We know this from Tagore's letter of 22 July 1936 to A. Stempkovsky :

"Dear friend,

I thank you for your letter in which you tell me of the great progress you have already made in the field of mass education, a movement the beginning of which I saw during my visit to the Soviet Republic and admired and appreciated so much. Also I must thank you for your invitation to visit Moscow in 1937 to witness the 20th Anniversary celebrations of the Revolution. Who knows I may yet be able to come, even though I am growing old and tired of body.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Rabindranath Tagore."

(Xerox copy from Rabindra Bhavana. This letter did not obviously reach its destination, and was 'lost').

- (454) Xerox copies of the letters.
- (455) RTF, pp. 170-2.
- (456) *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- (457) "Internasional'naya literatura". M., 1938, p. 231.
- (458) L. Mitrokhin : *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- (459) R. Tagore : *Selected poems*, tr. William Radici. Hammondsworth (etc.), Penguin, 1985, p. 102.
- (460) R. Rach., vol. 22, p. 19.
- (461) *Ibid.*
- (462) K. Kripalani : *op. cit.*, p. 386.
- (463) R. Rach., vol. 24, pp. 11-2.
- (464) K. Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
- (465) R. Rach., vol. 24, pp. 9-11.
- (466) *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- (467) *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.
- (468) *Ibid.*, vol. 25, p. 8.
- (469) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

- (470) *Ibid.*, vol. 25, p. 41.
- (471) *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- (472) *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- (473) *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- (474) R. Tagore : *Crisis in civilization*, Calcutta, 1950, pp. 16-17.
- (475) *Ibid.*
- (476) V. A. Novikova, "Poezdka Rabindranata Tagora v Sovetskii Soyuz" (Rabindranath Tagore's trip to Soviet Union), in *Uchenye zapiski LGU. Seriya Vostokovedcheskikh nauk* [Scientific transactions of the Leningrad State University. Oriental series], no. 9, 1960, no. 279, pp. 3-14.
- (477) "The Modern Review", July 1941.
- (478) R. Rach., vol., 26, p. 43.
- (479) V. Nagel' : *Rabindranat Tagor* (80 let so dnya rozhdeniya) [R. Tagore : On his 80th birthday],—"Literaturnoe obozrenie", 1941, no. 8, pp. 83-84.
- (480) I. M. Reisner in *Novaya istoriya kolonial'nykh i zavisimykh stran* [Modern History of Colonial and Dependent Countries], M., 1940, pp. 599-600.
- (481) N. Goldberg : *Un grand ecrivain indien* [A great Indian writer],—"La litterature internationale", 1941, No. 5, pp. 64-9.
- (482) A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *Vstupitel' naya stat'ya* (biograficheskii ocherk. [Introductory article (biographical outline)])—in R. Tagore : *Sochineniya*, v. 8 tomakh (Works, in 8 Vols.) Vol. 1, M. Goslitizdat, 1955, pp. v-xxvi.
 A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *Kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk, vstupitel'naya stat'ya* (Critical-biographical outline, an introductory article)—in R. Tagore : *Sochineniya*, V 12 tomakh (Works, in 12 Vols.). Vol. 1, M. Goslitizdat, 1961, pp. 7-60.
- (483) In this connection we would wish to quote the eminent Bengali writer, Maitreyi Devi. She writes : "Russia appreciated fully the kind thoughts of Tagore. We know that recently they have translated selected Works of Tagore in eight volumes direct from Bengali. This great enterprise was of their own volition and without prac-

tically any help from India. It was a work that in no other country and nowhere in the world was thought of or was possible to do. Even in India until very recently translations were done in other provinces, not from original Bengali, but from English renderings." (See her *The Great Wanderer*, p. 202). Later, during Tagore's birth centenary year, the USSR brought out a 12-volume edition, as we have already stated.

- (484) For instance, the articles included in *Rabindranat Tagor ; k stoletiyu so dnya rozhdeniya 1861-1961, sb. statei* (Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary Collection of Articles), M. 1961.

Among them are "Filosofskie vzglyady R. Tagora" [Philosophical Views of R. Tagore] by A. D. Litman ; "Nekotorye osobennosti liriki Tagora poslednikh let" [Some Characteristics of Tagore's Lyrical Poetry of Last Years], by A. A. Gorbovsky ; "Problemy national'no osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniya 1905-1908 gg. v Indii i ikh otrazhenie v publitsistike Rabindranath Tagora" (Problems of National-Liberation Movement in the Years 1905-1908 and Their Reflection in Publicist Writings of R. Tagore), by I. A. Tovstykh and A. I. Chicherov.

This Collection also has our article under the title "Literaturoe tvorchestvo R. Tagora" [R. Tagore's Literary Work] and others.

The articles on Tagore by the author of the present book are also available in *Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya* (Short Encyclopaedia of Literature, vol. 7) and *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, vol. 25).

This last article is also available in English in the English edition of the Encyclopaedia (GSE, Macmillan, NY, vol. 25).

We may also mention here besides, E. P. Chelyshev's articles "O khudozhestvennom metode R. Tagora" (On R. Tagore's Creative Method) in *Kratkie soobshcheniya instituta narodov Azii. No. 80. "Literaturovedenie"* [Short Communications from the Institute of Peoples

- of Asia, No. 80, "Literary Studies"], M., 1965, pp. 62-79 ; "Esteticheskie Vozzreniya R. Tagora" [R. Tagore's Aesthetic Views] in *Estetika i iskusstvo ; iz istorii domarksistskoi mysli* [Aesthetics and Art ; from the History of Pre-Marxist Thought] M., 1966, pp. 277-309 ; E. N. Komarov's "Egalitaristskie kontseptsii v Indii nachala XX v..." [Egalitarian Conceptions in India of early 20th century (Ananda Coomaraswamy, Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi)] in *Ideologicheskie problemy sovremennoi Indii* [Ideological Problems of Modern India, M., 1970, pp. 153-74].
- (485) A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk : *Rabindranat Tagor, Kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk (monograficheskaya rabota)* [R. Tagore : A Critical-Biographical Outline (a monograph)]. M., Goslitizdat, 1961, 163 p.
- (486) See E. K. Brosalina's articles "O gumanizme dramaturgii R. Tagora" [On Humanism in R. Tagore's Dramas] in *Uchenye zapiski LGU* [Scientific Transactions of the Leningrad State University, No. 306, Oriental series, No. 16, 1962, pp. 145-61] ; *Osnovnye napravleniya v dramaturgii Tagora* (Principal Trends in Tagore's Dramas) in "Vestnik LGU" (Bulletin of the Leningrad State University, No. 2, 'History of language and literature' series, No. 1, pp. 54-57) ; "Polozhitel'nyi geroi istoricheskikh dram R. Tagora" (Positive Hero is R. Tagore's Historical Dramas), also in "Vestnik LGU" (1975, No. 14, pp. 106-13) ; V. Ya. Ivbulis's "Chelovek i obshchestvo v romane Rabindranat Tagor 'Dom i mir'" (Man and Society in R. Tagore's novel 'The Home and the World') in the book *Problemy indiiskogo romana* (Problems of Indian Novel, M., 1964, pp. 143-67) ; *Mir. kak tvorchestvo (o nekotorykh storonakh esteticheskogo videniya mira u Tagora)* [World as a Creative Work on some aspects of the aesthetic vision of the world as Tagore sees it] in *Uchenye zapiski Latviiskogo Gosuniversiteta* [Scientific transactions of the Latvian State University, Vol. 209, Riga, 1975, pp. 1975, pp. 86-97] ; "Dva mira" (Two Worlds) in the book *Literaturny Indii. Stat'i i soobscheniya* (Literatures

of India. Articles and Reports, M., 1979, pp. 133-9]; "Literaturno-khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo R. Tagora : problema metoda (R. Tagore's Literary Artistic Work ; problem of method, Riga, 1981).

Viktor Batyuk translated a number of poems of Tagore from Bengali into Ukrainian. His latest book is *Rabindranat Tagor : Lirika* (R. Tagore : Lyrical Poems. Kiev, 1983). He is presently translating Tagore's poems and prose from Bengali into Ukrainian, to be published in a two-volume edition.

The 46-year-old diplomat, a member of the staff of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a great lover of Tagore. He recently said to the correspondent of the "Soviet Land" : " 'Tagore and Ukraine' is a topic of great interest, a vast field of activity for literary historians, translators and critics" ("Soviet Land", Sept '85, No. 17, p. 34).

- (487) R. Rach., vol. 26, p. 48.
- (488) "The Indo-Soviet Journal", Calcutta, 22 June '44. Quoted in L. Mitrokhin : *Friends of the Soviet Union* . . . , New Delhi, 1977, p. 37.
- (489) Rani Mahalanobis : *Baishe sravan*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 174.
- (490) Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis : "Rabindranath Tagore", VBQ, Aug.-Oct. 1949, p. 116.
- (491) R. Rach., vol. 26.
- (492) Rani Mahalanobis, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-6.
- (493) Nikolai Roerich : *Zazhigaite serdtsa* [Burn up the Hearts], M., 1978, p. 137.
- (494) Nikolai Roerich : *Iz literaturnogo naslediya*, p. 236.
- (495) R. Tagore : *Chithi-patra*, vol. 11, pp. 145-6.
- (496) "The Modern Review", Oct. 1944, pp. 184-5.

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[This select list gives only such references as have immediate relevance to our text. The conclusions and comments in this book are based on all available writings of Tagore. More bibliography are available in Notes & References.]

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NAME INDEX

(Text only)

A

Acharya, S. U. 346
Adelung, F. P. 11
Adhikari, Asa 262
Adrianov, S. A. 134-5
Aeschylus 97-8
Aleksandrov, G. G. 233
Ariam, W. 189, 239, 243, 246
Arosev, A. 207, 331-2
Aseev, N. 224
Asvaghosa, 41
Atkinson, W. [Ramacharaka] 45

B

Babel, 318
Balasanyan, S. A. 246
Bal'mont, K. D. 41, 160
Baltrushaiti's, Yu. 76, 78, 98
Banerjee (Bandopadhyaya),
Srikumar, 81
Barannikov, A. P. 77, 95-6
Barbusse, A. 211
Barsova, 226
Batyuk, V. G. 345
Bayer, T. S. 4
Belousov 132
Besant, A. 43, 53
Bhandarkar, R. G. 20, 206
Bhanudatta *see* Hari Kavi
Bharati, *Baba* Premananda (Suren-
drarath Mukherjee) 49
Birman, S. G. 233
Blavatskaya, E. P. 43
Blok, A. A. 45
Boetlingk, O. 13
Bogdanov, 204
Bogdanovich, M. 91
Bongard-Levin, G. M. 5, 6, 8, 10,
13-5, 21, 37, 39
Bopp, F. 11, 16
Bose, J. C. 83
Bose, Nandalal 267
Browning, R. 152, 164

Bryusov, V. 41, 97
Buddha 41, 53
Buehler 37
Bylange 63
Bunin, I. A. 78, 96, 128, 196
Butler 276, 343
Byron, G. 16, 87

C

Chaadaev 12
Chaitanya, 152
Chakravarti, Amiya, 189, 221-2,
227, 243, 280, 308
Chakravarti, Keshav, 190, 193
Chanda, A. K. 217
Chandidas 164
Chateaubriand, 84
Chatterjee (Chattopadhyaya)
Bankimchandra 20, 95, 143,
152-4
Debiprasad 37, 41
Nishikanta 191-2, 194, 350
Ramananda 196-7, 209, 263,
266, 274
Sunitikumar 15, 200
Chekhov, A. P. 196, 241
Chelyshev, E. P. 153, 345
Chertkov, V. G. 50
Chervonsky, O. M. 134
Chevchenko *see* Shevchenko
Chicherin 209-10, 214
Chukovsky, K. 135
Confucius, 53
Counts, G. S. 294
Courtenay, B. 92-3
Curson, 193

D

Dandin 39, 40
Das, Golaknath 6
Das, Taraknath 52
Dasgupta, Surendranath 206
Datta,
Anendrakumar 48

- Bhupendranath 346
 Pramanath [Daud Ali] 124, 191, 213
 Satyendranath 196
 Sudhindranath 287-8
 Davies, R. J. 275
 Dees, J. L. 298
 Demi, Yu. I. 234, 298
 Denis, R. S. 304
 Dev, Radhakanta 11
 Dharmakirti 38-9
 Dignaga 38
 Dobin, M. 222
 Dorn, B. 11
 Dostoevsky, F. M. 3, 194, 196, 211
- E**
- Efremov, G. S. 5
 Einstein, A. 189, 304, 310
 Einstein, M. 189, 198, 243
 Eisenstein, S. 235-6
 Elmhirst, O. 306
 Emerson, R. W. 53
 Engelhard, 133
 Epictetus 53
 Erdely 226
 Esenin, S. 161
 Eshukov, A. 222, 230, 246, 249
 Etingof 239
- F**
- Fedotov, G. P. 134-5
 Fet, A. A. 196
 Fichte 53
 Filatov, A. 234
- G**
- Gal'perin 251-2
 Gamayunov, L. S. 96-7, 149, 222, 318, 334
 Gandhi, M. K. 46-7, 52, 136, 148, 155-6, 165, 195, 212, 214, 216, 218, 227, 291, 293, 295, 296, 308, 310, 339
 Gedi, P. 83
 Ghosh, Kalimohan, 268
- Giatsintova, S. V. 233
 Gibbons, 16
 Gippius, V. V. 134
 Gizetti, A. A. 134
 Gladkov, F. 224, 318-9
 Gluck, 226
 Gnatyuk-Danil'chuk, A. P. 344
 Gogol, N. V. 81
 Goethe, J. W. 3, 86
 Gol'dberg, N. M. 343
 Gordon, G. I. 134
 Gorky, Maksim, 79, 81, 97, 133, 158, 162, 193, 196, 268, 318-9, 325-6
 Gorsky, U. U. 143
 Govil, H. G. 270
 Gretman, A. F. 78, 84
 Gruzinsky, A. E. 76, 127, 132
 Gruko-Kryaghin, V. A. 160
- H**
- Hafiz, 87
 Hari Kavi, 39
 Hawthorne, N. 81
 Hay, Stephen, N. 291, 298-9
 Hilferding, A. F. 14
 Hitler, 346
 Hodgson, B. 42
 Homer 6
 Hover 298
 Hume, 16
- I**
- Inber, V. M. 222, 224
 Indira Devi, 273, 315
 Ivbulis, V. 345
- J**
- Jakobi, H. 37
 James, F. 92
 Jones, W. 5
- K**
- Kabir, 136, 152, 164
 Kadambari Devi, 88, 191
 Kaigorodov, A. 123, 130-2
 Kalidasa, 5, 6, 11, 41, 136, 151

Kalinin, M. I. 214

Kant, E. 52-3

Kar, Surendranath, 263, 277

Karakhan, L. M. 205-7, 227, 235, 241

Karamzin, N. M. 3, 5

Karnaukhova, A. M. 134

Kautilya, 39

Khavkina, L. B. 78, 86

Khokhlova, E. S. 134

Khomyakov, A. S. 14

Kingina, A. 233

Knipper- Chekhova, O. L. 241

Kogan, P. S. 210, 225, 249, 310

Kolubovsky, I. 135, 162-3

Kossovich, K. A. 12-3, 19

Kozlovsky, I. S. 251

Kranikhsfeld, V. 85

Kripalani, K. 337

Krishna, 49, 50, 53

Kristi, M. P. 230-1

Kropotkin, P. A. 83

L

Lal, Gobind Behari, 232

Lal, Premchand, 306

Lao Tse 53

L'bovsky A.N. 216

Lebedev, G. S. 4, 6-9 19, 20, 124, 192

Lebedev, V. P. 82-3, 86-7

Lempitsky, V. S. 78

Lenin, V. I. 8, 97, 123-5, 157, 276

Lenz, R. 11

Leonov, L. 318-9

Lermontov, M. Yu. 196

Lesny, V. 81, 338

Levi, S. 41, 142, 203

Lewis, S. 300, 304

Likiardopulo, M. 78

Litman, A. D. 83, 150, 345

Lomonosov, M. V. 4, 191

Lunacharsky, A. V. 88, 97, 126, 130, 165, 189, 208, 210, 220, 344

L'vovsky, Z. 88

M

Maeterlinck 89, 92

Mahalanobis, Nirmalkumari (Rani) 209, 241, 258, 297, 305, 346

Mahalanobis, Prasanta, 209, 241, 252, 255, 258, 260, 346

Maisky, I. 209, 348

Majumdar *see* Mazumdar

Makovitsky, D. P. 48, 50, 52

Malinovskaya, E. K. 246

Marcus Aurelius 53

Marianov 243

Marvin, N. M. 290

Maupassant G. de 48

Mayakovsky, V. V. 158, 162, 224

Mendel 257, 270

Merezhkovsky, D. S. 41

Meyerkhof'd, V. E. 210

Minaev, I. P. 9, 12, 19-21, 37, 77, 350

Mishra, Krishna 12

Mitrokhin, L. V. 307, 323

Modi, D. 206

Mukhopadhyaya (Mukherjee)

Dhurjatiprasad 81, 315

Hirendranath 345-6

Prabhatkumar 210, 273

Sujit 273, 298

N

Nagarjuna 39

Nagel', V. 343

Nazhivin, I. F. 49

Nechaev 141, 161

Nehru, Jawaharlal 148, 150, 213-4, 218, 227, 275, 308, 310, 339

Nehru, Motilal 213-4

Nekrasov, N. A. 196, 216

Nemirovich-Danchenko, V. I. 97, 241

Nexo, M. A. 211

Nikitin, Afanasii 3, 4

Nosovich, D. R. 134-5

Novikova V. A. 95-6, 149

Nevomirsky, D. 222, 249

Obermiller, Y. 39

- Ognev, N. 224
 Olcott 43
 Ol'denburg S. F. 12, 21, 37, 40-1, 143, 164-5, 210
 Ovchinnikov, F. 53
- P**
- Pallas, P. 4
 Parker, J. 152
 Pascal 53
 Paustovsky, K. 75
 Pavlovich, M. P. 210
 Pearson, W. W. 128
 Peter, the first 4
 Petrov, A. A. 5
 Petrov, P. Ya. 11-2, 77
 Petrov, F. N. 223-5, 227-9, 234, 239, 242, 247-52, 256, 291, 308, 311, 331
 Piatnitsky 252
 Pickett, Clarence 271
 Pimenova, E. K. 134
 Pinkevich, A. P. 225
 Pisareva 51
 Plato 53
 Podgorichani, M. 78
 Podgornyi, B. A. 233
 Pogossky V. 78
 Portugalov V. 79, 95
 Pratima Devi 299
 Pusheshnikov, N. A. 78, 95, 128, 135
 Pushkin, A. S. 3, 5, 11, 87, 196, 325-6
 Pyatnitsky *see* Piatnitsky
- Radharani Devi 262
 Radici, W. 129, 132
 Rakitin, L. 134
 Ramacharaka *see* Atkinson, W.
 Ramakrishna, Paramahansa, 37, 40, 42, 45-8, 50, 87
 Raman C. V. 206-7
 Rathborn 342
 Reisner, I. M. 343
 Rhys, E. 81
- Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. 251
 Ritter, P. G. 37, 40, 135, 164
 Rockefeller 274, 289
 Rodon M. 78
 Roerich E. I. 42, 76, 312-3, 320-1, 324, 326-7
 Roerich, N. 15, 21, 42, 76-8, 97-8, 142, 200-3, 307, 311-4, 317-30, 337, 347
 Roerich, S. 321
 Roerich, Yurii (George) 200
 Rolland, Romain 45, 47, 92, 134, 193, 208, 221, 310
 Romanov, P. 318
 Roosevelt, F. D. 300
 Roth, R. 13
 Rousseau 53
 Roy
 Bharat Chandra 7
 M. N. 157-8
 Rammohan 16-7, 152-3
 Rudzitis 324
 Runovskaya A. D. 78
 Ruskin, John 195
 Ruslanov 251-2
 Russat E. R. 134
 Rustaveli, Sh. 330
 Rutin 235
 Ryabtsev 252
 Rybakov, B. A. 15
- S**
- Saishnikova, E. I. 78
 Sabashnikov, I. 128, 132
 Sadlar, M. 219
 Sankara 147, 150-1
 Sarkar, Jadunath 80
 Sastri, Haraprasad 20
 Sazanova, Vera 193
 Schegel 16
 Schopenhauer 51-3
 Schubert 226
 Scott, L. 193
 Sen
 Hembala 287
 Keshav Chandra 152-3
 Rajani Ranjan 78, 96

- Sergeenko, K. A. 48
 Serebryakov, I. D. 334
 Serebryannyi, S. D. 161
 Severtsev, S. 239-40
 Shakespeare, W. 3, 51, 140
 Shatsky, S. T. 238
 Shaw, G. B. 307
 Shchepkina-Kupernik, I. L. 135
 Shcherbatskoi, F. I. 9, 12, 21, 37-41, 77, 142-3, 204, 213, 247, 334, 350
 Shebuev 134
 Shelley, A. G. 294
 Shelley, P. B. 152, 164
 Shengeli, G. 210, 254, 256
 Shevchenko 252
 Shklyar 225
 Shklovsky, I. V. 75, 84-5, 87
 Shklyaver, A. 133
 Sholokhov, M. A. 330
 Shor, R. 246
 Shtreikher, L. 210
 Shvarts M. N. 133
 Sidorov, A. A. 230, 239
 Simonov 251-2
 Sinha, Sasadhar 317
 Siroi, Yu. 127
 Sludsky, A. I. 78-9, 83
 Sludsky, A. F. 79, 83
 Smirnova-Brosalina, E. K. 345
 Socrates 53
 Solov'ev V. 196, 211
 Sophocles 140
 Spasskaya, V. 78
 Stanislavsky, K. S. 42, 97-8, 210, 241
 Stark, L. N. 216
 Stasov, V. V. 42
 Strizhevskaya L. A. 149
- T**
- Tagore
 Debendranath 20, 152-3, 190
 Dwarkanath 16-8
 Jyotirindranath 191
 Rabindranath *passim*. See supplementary Index
 Rathindranath 200, 243, 296
- Saumyendranath 189, 215-7, 228, 241
 Tan Bogoraz, V. G. 89, 134-42, 154, 203
 Tardov, V. G. 78, 87-8
 Tatarinova, S. V. 78
 Thompson E. 81, 143
 Tikhonov, N. S. 348-9
 Timbers, Harry 189, 243
 Timofeevsky, P. I. 93-4
 Tolstoy, A. N. 158
 Tolstoy, Il'ya 204
 Tolstoy, Leo 3, 21, 37, 42, 45-54, 75, 79, 84, 137-8, 142, 164, 194-6, 211, 216, 325-8
 Troyanovsky, K. 128-30
 Trubachev, O. 15
 Tsiganov 226
 Tubyansky, M. I. 9, 39, 124-5, 132, 134-5, 142-56, 164.
 Tulsidas 164
 Turgenev, I. S. 81, 195
- U**
- Ul'yanovsky R. A. 156, 160
 Uvarov, S. S. 10
 Vakhtangov 243, 252
 Valmiki 12
 Val'ter A. A. 230
 Vasilenko 210, 311
 Vasil'ev V. P. 143, 350
 Vasin, P. 78, 135
 Vasco da Gama 3
 Vdovin, V. 318, 334
 Vel'tman, S. 157-60, 246
 Vengerova, Z. 78, 88-91, 96, 132, 135
 Vereshchagin, V. V. 9, 42
 Verhaern, E. 92
 Verigin, P. V. 48
 Vidyapati 164
 Vidyasagar, Isvarachandra 152
 Vigasin A. 5, 6, 8, 10, 13-5, 21, 39
 Vinogradov P. 204
 Vivekananda 37, 42, 44-54,

- 75, 150, 345
Voikov, P. L. 209
Voinov, P. A. 134
Vol'sky, S. 135
Voronsky, A. 126-8, 133, 207
Vostrikov, A. I. 39
Vrubel' 232
- W**
- Wagner, R. 151
Whitman, W. 85, 152, 161
Wilkins 5
Williams, A. R. 224
Wilson, H. 11
- Woolf 293
Wrench, E. 307
- Y**
- Yeats, W. B. 96
- Z**
- Zagorskaya 252
Zel'dovich, V. 333
Zelenin, V. F. 246
Zhukovsky 191
Zhuravskaya Z. 133
Zoroaster 304

SUPPLEMENTARY INDEX

(Subject ; Selective)

TAGORE, RABINDRANATH

CORRESPONDENCE with ...

Daud Ali 213

Nikolai 201-2, 311-3,
329-30

Shcherbatskoi, F. I. 204, 247,
334

Tagore, Saumyendranath 215-6

VOKS 208-9, 217, 308, 311,
318-19, 330-3

"International Literature" 333-4

MEETINGS WITH SOVIET ...

artists and art critics 230-3

cinema workers and film pro-
ducers 235-6, 254

indologists 246

peasants 236-8

pioneers 233-5

public 248-52

students and professors 229-30

theatre workers and artists
226, 233, 241, 246, 251-2

writers 224-6

— — individuals

Arosev, A. J. 207-8

Balasanyan 246

Karakhan, L. M. 205-6, 235,
241, 246

Knipper-Chekhova, Ol'ga 241

Kristi, M. P. 230

Lunacharsky, A. V. 208, 220-1

Petrov, F. 222-4, 226-9, 246-8

Roerich, Nikolai 200, 202

Shatsky, S. T. 238-9

Shengeli, G. 254

ON

Tan Bogoraz, V. G. 203

British rule in India 125, 197-
8, 227, 244-5, 283-6, 341-2

Civilisation, modern Western
225, 242, 282 ff 301, 305,
307, 309

Civilisation, new colonialism
198

Nature of 281, 283, 302

Fascism and militarism 330,
335-8

Greed

destruction of, in Soviet
Russia 278-80

as basis of British policy
276, 286

as moral principle of Capi-
talism 281, 342

as Upanishadic idea 277-8

Imperialist policy (specially,
war) 192-3, 198, 259-60,
268, 303

Nationalism in Japan 132

October Revolution 199, 253,
259, 288, 348

Palestinian problem 302-3

Religious prejudices 259, 264-5

Santiniketan 230, 293

USSR

achievements 250, 266

art treasures, preservation of
268

awakening of masses 245, 259,
292

concern for whole mankind
223, 235

education 226, 228-9, 238, 245,
248, 255, 270, 293-4

general impressions 221, 242-4
Ideal, close to Tagore 225, 251,
288

India gaining from Soviet ex-
perience 224, 228, 288

literature 194-6, 318-9, 330

national policy 261

peace, need for 259-60

peasantry 237-8, 260

prophecy—of Soviet victory
over fascism 347

theatres 245, 264, 292

- visit of Indians—importance of 297
- USA
- general impressions
- (U.S culture, cult of wealth etc.) 293, 300, 305
- Negroes in USA 283, 302
- Wealth 243, 270, 309
- World War II 330, 346-7
- Zamindari 258, 289
- [ON RABINDRANATH TAGORE] ...
- Gol'dberg MN 344
- Gruzinsky A.E. 127-8
- "Izvestiya" 236, 294
- Kaigorodov, A. 130-2
- Khavkina, L.B. 86
- Kogan P.S. 310-1
- Kolubovsky, I. Ya. 162-4
- Kristi, M. P. 231
- Kropotkin 83
- Lebedev, V. P. 82, 86-7
- Lunacharsky, A. V. 165-6
- Ol'denburg S.F. 164-5
- Petrov, Fedor N. 225, 248-50
- Paustovsky, K. 75
- Reisner, I. M. 343-4
- Ritter, P. G. 164
- Roerich Nikolai 76-8, 313-4, 328-9
- Severtsev, 239-40
- Shengeli G. 256-7
- Shklovsky, I. V. 85
- Stanislavsky, K. 97-8
- Tan Bogoraz, V. G. 136-42
- Tradov, V. G. 87-8
- Tikhonov N. 349-50
- Timofeevsky, P. I. 93-4
- Troyanovsky, K. 128-30
- Tubyansky, M. I. 145-56
- Vel'tman, S. 158-60
- Vengerova, Z. 88-91
- Voronsky, A. 126-7
- VISIT TO USSR 199-347
- Planned in
- 1925 206,
- 1926 207-11
- 1927 211-3
- 1928 216-7
- 1929 217-8
- 1930 189-90, 220 ff
- Departure for—by special train 189, 221-22
- Arrival in 222
- Stay in—chronicle of 222-56
- Farewell speech 250-1
- Departure from 256
- Interview to "Izvestiya" 234, 236, 238, 254-5
- Invitation in 1937 331-2
- WORKS *passim*
- Letters from Russia* (English tr.)
- An American tr. (during Tagore's life time) 333
- Ban on 275-6, 316
- Plays
- Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko's plans to stage 97-8
- Poems
- Political lyrics 336-8 343
- Short Stories—first (in Europe) translation and appreciation in Russia 79, 82-4
- Importance of 80-2
- Paintings
- Exhibition in Moscow 239

